GURPS Fourth Edition

HORROR

By Kenneth Hite

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS® Fourth Edition

HORROR

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Introduction

So what is horror?

Horror is a matter of intent, and a matter of content. Anything written to frighten the audience is horror. Horror is usually a goal, not a genre; horror can appear in Westerns, romances, science fiction, fantasy, and mysteries. Wherever the writer wants to make your flesh creep, there's horror. Horror can be a genre, though, and in one sense it's the oldest genre of all. The first stories we have, from the Sumerian epics, are full of evil gods, the birth of monsters, and malevolent scorpion-men. And we have only added to that supply of scares over the next five millennia. Vampires, werewolves, psycho killers, haunted houses, and hundreds of other time-tested elements now jam-pack the horror toolbox.

These are, however, diverse elements. Horror doesn't have to be supernatural – the Black Death was completely natural, and completely horrific. Horror doesn't have to be human – the slow, inevitable death of the universe scared H.P. Lovecraft more than any personal narrative ever did. But horror doesn't stay in its box – the Black Death helped inspire the legend of the vampire, and the inevitable laws of physics gave the 20th century both the mighty Godzilla and Great Cthulhu. Horror is as sloppy as a Jack the Ripper killing, and as neat as Josef Mengele's fingernails.

With something so slippery, it can take some work to get it right. That's true of writers, film directors, and artists – and roleplayers. The GM has to want to scare you, work to scare you, try to scare you. You, the players, have to want to be scared, work to be scared, try to be scared. Horror is the most collaborative of styles, which makes it perfect for roleplaying games. The GM and players must contract to play a horror game, and agree to build the atmosphere of fear together. Otherwise, it just plain won't work.

But when it does work – well, then, you have roleplaying at its finest pitch. Fear is the strongest, oldest emotion of all, buried deep in all our psyches from the caveman days, when we were one campfire away from the saber-tooth tigers. But as deep as it's buried, you can bring it to the surface with some dim lighting, a hushed tone, and a good story. It's a bottomless well of power, catharsis, and bloody farm implements, and it's waiting for you.

So enter freely and of your own will, both GM and player, ready to scare and to be scared, to join hands around the metaphorical campfire, listen to the snarl of the saber-tooth tiger, and to share the oldest and strongest emotion . . . and to make it brand new again.

Pleasant screams.

Publication History

This is the fourth edition of ***GURPS Horror.*** It expands upon, mutates, and replaces ***GURPS Horror,*** *Third Edition* (2002), which Kenneth Hite sewed together and reanimated from his own horror roleplaying guide ***Nightmares of Mine,*** along with the gigantic and wonderful limbs and organs previously assembled by J.M. Caparula in ***GURPS Horror,*** *Second Edition* (1990). That madman attached such things to the hellish torso of ***GURPS Horror,*** *First Edition* (1987), given eldritch unlife by Scott Haring. Its heart still beats within the unholy amalgamation you hold now.

About the Author

Kenneth Hite fervently believes that he was the first person to buy ***Call of Cthulhu*** in the state of Oklahoma, and has been running and playing horror RPGs nigh-constantly since then. Also since then, he has (among other things) developed and co-authored ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** and ***GURPS WWII: Weird War II,*** written ***GURPS Cabal,*** and created over 300 "Suppressed Transmission" columns for *Pyramid* magazine. Additionally, he has written for ***Nephilim, Vampire: The Masquerade, Deadlands, Vampire: The Dark Ages, Unknown Armies, Call of Cthulhu d20, Vampire: The Requiem, Delta Green,*** and a smattering of games less obviously horrific.

His most recent works include the ENnie Award-winning RPG ***Trail of Cthulhu,*** a ***Savage Worlds*** setting describing ***The Day After Ragnarok,*** the blasphemous children's books *Where the Deep Ones Are* and *The Antarctic Express,* the critical essay collection *Tour de Lovecraft: The Tales,* and the ongoing "Lost in Lovecraft" column for *Weird Tales* magazine.

He lives in Chicago with many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, his wife Sheila, the mandatory Lovecraftian cats, and a tell-tale heart.

There is no delight the equal of dread.

– Clive Barker

Chapter One

The Rag and Bone Shop

After the chaos and the screaming and the blood . . . oh, God, the blood . . . in the house, Valerie didn't mind being left alone outside. She was wearing a fireman's jacket, otherwise unprotected from the cold mist that was deciding to form up in raindrops any minute now. Rain wouldn't be a problem. Not tonight. Not after what had happened in the house.

It should be as noisy as the inside of a Humvee right about now, she thought, but either the mist or incipient shock muted everything around her. Even the cop cars and fire trucks and ambulances looked muted, just blackish boxes in the fog. She could see the flashing lights, red and blue and red and blue. She could see the firemen spraying water into the still-smoldering foyer, where her improvised Molotov-with-a-twist had gone off an hour ago. An I-IED, she thought, and clamped down on the strangled chuckle that was building in her throat.

She needed to focus, dammit. Valerie looked around at the flashing lights and the busy cops . . . and the EMT guys, who were just as busy, but not in any hurry. Not for her friends, not now. It was too late for them, had been too late, really, even when they opened the door to the abandoned McMansion . . . No, that wasn't helping.

The man in the black raincoat was there when she looked back around, and for a second she looked at his eyes. He's a killer, she thought, and even after those hours in that house, she could feel her hands twitch with new adrenaline. But then he smiled, and she forced herself to calm down. Just a cop, finally here to take a statement.

Then she really looked at his smile, and thought maybe her first reaction wasn't far off. He flashed a badge before she could decide, one she didn't have time to read before he put it away.

"Ms. Valerie Browning? Or should I say Corporal Browning?" He made a show of checking a Blackberry. We know all about you already, his gesture said. Save us the trouble. She'd seen that one, too. A killer with questions.

"Ms. Browning is fine," she said, her voice weirdly level in her ears.

*"Yes," he replied. "Ms. Browning **is** fine. Interestingly, six of her friends are **not** fine. More interestingly still, the thing in the house . . ." His smile tightened further as he saw her eyes shift to the doorway. ". . . the thing in the house is not fine, either."*

"Is it . . .?" She hated herself, not for wanting to know, but for letting him know she wanted to know.

"Yes. Or rather, it's not just dead, it's inert, it's empty, and it's not coming back. You'll be surprised how often setting them on fire works just as well as anything fancy."

*"What do you mean, I **will** be surprised? What do you mean, **them?** What do you mean . . ." She trailed off, unwilling to make her question real by asking it.*

He made it real, with neither cruelty nor caring. "What I mean is what you know I mean. When you start working for us. You passed the entrance exam tonight. You're in."

*"Wait just one second . . . you haven't even **asked** me if I want to work for you people!" If you **are** people, her brain yammered.*

His response was a softening look. Not caring for her, certainly not seeing her as a person . . . as a victim in all this . . . not really seeing her at all. It was almost like . . . nostalgia?

"They never asked me, either," he murmured, almost to himself. Then the smile, no, the rictus came back. "But President Coolidge was never one for useless conversation."

Horror can strike anyone, anywhere, anywhen. From a small band of dwarves tracking a manticore to its lair before it kills again to an elite company of space marines dropped into a malevolent living ocean, any traditional PC types (and many untraditional ones, from visionary painters to realtors with peculiar Transylvanian clients) can become the heroes of a horror story. Horror protagonists can range from 25-point teenagers alone in the woods to 1,200-point supermen, or beyond! The only hard-and-fast requirements for a horror character are that he's interesting to play and that his background fits into the campaign to everyone's satisfaction. Build and play your character to maximize both fun (yours and the GM's) and fear – and remember that these are the *same thing* in a horror game.

> *In the end, of course, we remain puppets and our smiles are still painted ones. But now at least we have moistened them with our own blood.*
>
> *– Thomas Ligotti, "Professor Nobody's Little Lectures on Supernatural Horror"*

Embrace Your Fear

Horror roleplaying is different from other kinds of roleplaying. The players not only need to handle all the normal details of their characters' development, but must work *collaboratively* to maintain the atmosphere that the GM is trying to build. Poorly timed jokes or out-of-character comments are rude in *any* game – but in a horror game, they can be downright fatal to everyone's enjoyment.

In addition, many of the details of character creation, development, and play can differ when the goal of the game is not only to gain character points, but to enjoy the mood of the uncanny that the GM and other players will create. The *player's* goal is to help build fear. The *character's* goal is entirely different – it's probably just to survive and thrive as best he can. Nobody *needs* to play the girl who suicidally wanders into the crypt alone at midnight in her nightgown . . . but that can be a lot more fun than playing the girl who stays safely locked in her apartment with her cat!

Character Design

While character creation is a key part of *any* kind of roleplaying, it's an even bigger deal in horror. A PC's background and abilities will shape, perhaps even determine the player's crucial personal investment in the horror. And vice versa: Build a character that you want to see horrors happen to.

Character Concept

Making a concept "work" in the horror genre depends a great deal on cooperation between players and GM, and also among the players. The traditional horror game (or story) presupposes that the protagonists are all "good" – or at least that the evil they face is so overwhelming that the assassin and the knight (or the hit man and the FBI agent) will have a powerful common interest in stopping it. Other horror styles work on different assumptions: games of conspiracy and paranoia, of Gothic seduction, or of psychological disintegration might benefit from strong cross-currents between the PCs. Know which kind of horror you're facing before you decide who's facing it.

Brief Biography

Once you've generated your character, review his sheet and put together a brief biography. Try to work in all the advantages, disadvantages, skills, etc. you've been thinking of as game stats. Transform them into the stuff of a life story. You don't have to write an epic or even an encyclopedia entry – you might simply compose your alter ego's résumé, or write one diary entry for each year of his career.

This exercise doesn't merely give your hero more depth and reality; it also increases player identification with the character, an essential component of building horror. Just answering a few seemingly simple questions about him – from his physical appearance to his parents' names to his happiest childhood memory – can bring him into sharp focus and reality. This can happen before you write down the first numbers on the sheet; indeed, the GM may work with you to generate your character in precisely that fashion.

A biography has another benefit, too: You can mine it for character hooks.

Character Hooks

A "character hook" is some aspect of a PC's personality or history that the GM can exploit to develop plotlines or scenes in the campaign. When you put such hooks into your character's background, you give the GM license to use them this way. And since it's a *horror* campaign, these uses are liable to be unpleasant for the hero! The GM may not even tell you what a given hook means – if the roustabout space pilot doesn't know where his brother disappeared to 13 years ago, it's more of an unpleasant surprise when said brother turns up as the Vampire Lord's footman.

Why would any sensible player let the GM do that to his character? For one thing, it helps create the story and gives the player an investment in that story. Remember, horror gaming is even more of a collaborative effort than regular roleplaying. With a hook for the GM to use, collaboration is built in. When blasphemous evil directly affects something in the hero's past, it's more meaningful to the character *and* to the player than if it was the brother of some passerby whom the Vampire Lord enslaved.

Personalizing Characters

Certain qualities crop up again and again among the heroes of horror fiction. The vampire hunter is always resolute, the explorer is always resourceful, and the victims of the mad slasher are always stupid. (We've all screamed, "Don't go outside alone, you idiot!" at one time or another.) However, players should balance the ease and familiarity of such concepts with the potential for freshness and surprise in role reversal – playing a vampire hunter who's a paranoid coward would be an interesting switch from the typical Van Helsing type! Each player should decide for himself where the line falls between archetype and stereotype when creating his character.

Of course, that leads to the question: What's a paranoid coward doing out vampire hunting? Give your PC a motivation (p. 9), a reason to enter the crypt at night when good sense would lead most people to leave town in a hurry. Sometimes, a character hook (pp. 6-8) can provide such a trigger; in other cases, it might just come from within the hero himself. A man who's killed a few vampires has cause to be paranoid, and even a coward can get into danger again if given a sufficiently important incentive. What motivates him – be it the promise of treasure, the desperate need to save face, the desire for some eldritch lore that only the Vampire King possesses, or threats to his loved ones – is what you must decide.

Remember not only to adjust your character's fundamental features, but also to think about the little things that can bring him to life. Something as simple as a catchphrase, a nervous habit, or a lucky keychain can help crystallize your alter ego in your mind – and, just as important, in the minds of fellow players and the GM.

More selfishly, it gives the player some guaranteed "spotlight time" or "story share." The GM should always make sure that every player gets some time in the spotlight of the main action, or has some share in helping to solve the mystery, defeat the evil, or remove the curse. By utilizing hooks, PCs who haven't yet been front-and-center in the campaign can have their turn. Many advantages and disadvantages – including Allies (p. B36), Dependents (p. B131), Enemies (p. B135), and Patrons (p. B72) – can serve as ready-made hooks.

Here are some common hooks, with hints on how to use them in a horror game. Many of these can be tied into the hero's family history. This has two great advantages. First, the theme of the family opening the protagonist up to malevolent supernatural influence is at the heart of the Gothic horror tradition (see *Gothic Horror,* p. 125). Second, attention given to the character's family deepens the PC's reality for player and GM alike, and can generate further hooks. (You might even be able to get points for one of them, as a Dependent!)

Childhood Curse

The childhood curse is a traditional fantasy or fairy-tale horror character hook. Often, a powerful witch or evil faerie, jealous of (or wronged by) the hero's parents, placed the curse on him. Its effects can be as dramatic as the player and GM feel necessary. As long as the character remains playable, the sky's the limit.

The curse can have a "delayed action"; e.g., on the victim's 21st birthday, she'll kill her brother. In a fantasy or early historical setting – such as ancient Greece or Viking Europe – the sufferer will probably know about the curse, and may even be able to quote the specific prophecy. In a more modern game, he could have been born under a very unlucky astrological conjunction (or during an eclipse of the moon), which opens him up to dark forces. Unless his family consists of occultists (which is its own kind of curse), he might not even know about it.

The curse might instead be a family curse – if all of your ancestors have died at sea, then news of a haunted ship takes on a whole new significance! It may be possible to evade the curse; if someone is cursed because his family owns the Dreadnight Diamond, then he can renounce his family, convince them to sell the diamond, or steal it and sell it himself. Alternatively, the family *blood* could be tainted; if the hero's great-great-grandfather was a werewolf, then he should be very careful under the full moon. In a modern or futuristic game, the curse might even be a mutation.

Curses can manifest as Destiny (p. B131), ghostly or haunting Enemies (p. B135), Klutz (p. B141), Unluckiness (p. B160), Weirdness Magnet (p. B161), or numerous other disadvantages. Some might not affect the PC, but his Evil Twin (p. B135). And a few unfortunate souls suffer from a Divine Curse (p. B132) or are just plain Cursed (p. B129).

Evil Ancestor

This hook can be tied into any of the other hooks in this section, as cause (because of Great-Uncle Jonas' blasphemous experiments, the castle has been cursed for centuries), effect (Great-Uncle Jonas was only the first and most famous member of the family to fall victim to the disturbing family brain malady), or both (for the player with an urge toward the highly baroque). Worse, Great-Uncle Jonas might not even be dead . . .

Evil ancestors might pass down unpleasant physical disadvantages or Supernatural Features (p. B157), or give a descendant an unwholesome Reputation (p. B26) as the scion of a tainted line.

Guilty Secret

The murder mostly covered up, the history of sexual excess, the youthful flirtation with Satanism, the child abandoned. A guilty secret might be more ambivalent yet, something that merely leads to social ostracism or to perhaps unjust criminal penalties; e.g., adultery in Puritan New England. A classic character hook for psychological horror (pp. 125-126), the guilty secret can be personal or (especially in Gothic horror games) familial.

If one's family keeps the legitimate heir to the earldom locked in the attic because of his monstrosity, or built its fortune on slave-trading, or marries the eldest daughter to the Minotaur every generation, then there's no shortage of skeletons for the GM to mobilize from the familial closet.

A guilty secret is almost always a Secret (p. B152), but can also be tied to other disadvantages such as Addiction (p. B122), Bloodlust (p. B125), Enemies (p. B135), Paranoia (p. B148), Sadism (p. B152), or Social Disease (p. B155). Even if exposing the secret can no longer harm the hero – he killed an innocent girl, but was acquitted at trial – it might gnaw at his conscience, driving him to Alcoholism (p. B122), Chronic Depression (p. B126), Flashbacks (p. B136), Guilt Complex (p. B137), Insomniac (p. B140), Killjoy (p. B140), Low Self-Image (p. B143), Nightmares (p. B144), or the suicidal behavior of On the Edge (p. B146).

Haunted Item

Something the hero owns is haunted, cursed, possessed by a ghost or a demon, or otherwise an entryway for malign supernatural forces. A ring with a curiously glowing stone, a sword with a thirst for human blood, a machine for reviving the dead, or an eldritch tome bound in the skin of a mighty necromancer will all create more than their share of adventure possibilities. Any of them might be a gadget (pp. B116-117), or the invention (p. B477) of some mad-scientist ancestor. If the item is also tremendously valuable, useful, or even magical, then both the character and the player may be unwilling to get rid of it despite its unsavory nature. Some articles (especially Signature Gear, p. B85) also have an uncanny tendency to return to their former owners – often after a chain of bloody coincidences.

The "item" may be a *place* – a demon-plagued barony, a swamp with something from beyond lurking in it, or a full-fledged haunted house. Haunted property is, of course, often inherited from one's family. The process of exorcising the ghosts or unraveling the curse may involve uncovering horrific truths about the inheritor's past or ancestry. Will the hero be as willing to damn the ghost of his own ancestor to unending torment as he would some nameless revenant?

A haunted item might directly grant powers or abilities. It could be a source of Wealth (p. B25) or Status (p. B28) in its own right, as well as a valuable antique. Or it may just look cool and attract danger.

Insanity

If the character has been insane in the past, then a whole realm of possibilities opens up for the GM. In a psychological horror game run with large helpings of surrealism (p. 123), it may become slowly, horribly obvious that the "former" madman is *still* insane; his memories and observations simply cannot be trusted. Even if the GM isn't willing to go to such surrealistic lengths (which aren't for everyone), he can justify almost anything in the hero's past, from a long-lost son to mass murder. The specific circumstances of the original descent into madness might linger as a Phobia (p. B148), or as a Berserk stimulus (p. B124) to be triggered by some event in the campaign. For further disadvantages that may signify mental illness, see *Insanity* (pp. 142-146).

The concept of the "bad seed" – hereditary insanity of a given bloodline – emerged during the early Renaissance once the notion of madness as demonic possession (or divine "touch") began to wane. Peaking in the early 20th century, it faded under Freudian and other psychoanalytic onslaught, which tended to explain insanity solely by reference to the patient's life history. Currently, geneticists identify some mental illnesses (or susceptibility to them) as potentially heritable, returning a family history of insanity to a plausible force in a "realistic" horror campaign. Especially in a pulp-era, Victorian, or earlier historical horror setting, a sensitive fellow's own fear of insanity could end up driving him insane.

Missing Relative

The long-lost sibling, spouse, parent, or child is a natural target for the machinations of the GM's plot. Whether the missing family member surfaces as a victim, a puppet, or an active agent in the horror plaguing the party, the affected PC is in for some unpleasant decisions. In a science-fiction horror campaign, these decisions might not end with the relative's sorry demise, because one can never be sure that there isn't a clone somewhere (ghouls, doppelgängers, ghosts, and shapeshifting aliens can fill a similar role in more traditional horror games).

It's an extra dose of unpleasantness if the hero's vanished great-great-grandfather shows up amid the action when he has no business even being alive. Immortality is seldom a *good* thing in horror, and an ancient relative might have some very unsavory knowledge about the family . . .

Finding a missing relative may be an Obsession (p. B146) or just a handy excuse. A sufficiently creepy relation makes a good unknown Enemy (p. B135).

Missing Time

This hook is most common in tales of UFO paranoia, but many other subgenres use the "mysterious spell of amnesia" as a handy plot device. To the inventive or fiendish GM, this amounts to a blank check – anything that could be justified by insanity might just as easily have occurred during the "blank spot" in the amnesiac's memory. The GM can handle this using secret advantages and disadvantages (p. 22), treat it as a False Memory (see *Delusions,* pp. 23-25), or modify the Amnesia disadvantage (p. B123) to suit the specific case. In a conspiracy game, waking up to find yourself Zeroed (p. B100) may have much the same effect, even if you *think* that all of your memories are intact!

Missing time in a family history is harder to construct but sometimes worth the trouble. If the courthouse with the family records burns down, then anything could have been true about the hero's ancestors. Imagine the shock as he discovers that his grandparents never existed – no birth certificates, no death certificates, and no marriage certificates. Who were they? And where did his *parents* come from?

Character Development

Once the character is fully designed, laden with hooks and history, and (hopefully) tied into a well-defined setting, his adventures can begin. Ideally, he'll enter play fitting into the world and the campaign – that's part of what all those hooks are for! But it's the player's job to make sure that he *continues* to fit as well (or better) as events progress. Remember that the horror game, more so than most RPGs, is a collaborative, cooperative exercise. If the campaign is a globetrotting one (pp. 107-109), a would-be hero who takes on some important responsibility – one that doesn't let him jet off to the Darkest Congo at the drop of a telegram – is harder to fit in. If the focus is on paranoia and the secret war, don't let your investigator turn into a blinkered skeptic. And if all the other PCs are werewolves, don't let yours get cured of lycanthropy.

It's important to let each PC develop as an individual in the course of the campaign, though. The happy-go-lucky thief won't be as jolly after a few brushes with the Ghoul Prince. He may turn sober and thoughtful, planning his actions meticulously. He might take to hedonism and excess, laughing too loud and partying too long, trying to forget his nightmares in the fleshpots and wineshops of the city. He could simply withdraw into a shell, fighting mechanically until his certain doom. It's impossible to tell how any person – real or fictional – will react to the kind of stress and fear that a horror game creates. The only thing that's certain is that he'll change as a result.

You don't have to plot this out as a player; just let these reactions happen and they'll seem natural and organic to the character. If this evolution means that one day you no longer feel like playing him, then talk to the GM about retirement options – or even a messy but inspirational death. Most GMs love the "guilt-free kill," which adds a note of horror and personal danger without hard feelings from the players. The campaign will gain another major plot element, and your PC will have died as a person rather than living as a cardboard cutout.

Motivation, or, "Why Are We in This Graveyard at Night?"

Every player must answer that question for his own character. In a one-shot game, there may be *no* motivation besides surviving the night – the heroes were just unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Over a longer campaign, an adventurer needs a reason to keep breaking into crypts, following strange lights into the swamp, and otherwise risking a messy, painful death. It can be tough to supply such a motive; after all, the people who know the most about vampires are the ones who would logically try to stay as far away from them as possible. Why not just leave town? A few possible motivations follow; many of them can tie into character hooks or the PC's family history. Ideally, the GM will also have some answers for you; see *Cowards Die a Thousand Deaths* (p. 138).

Duty: "I solemnly swear to protect the United States of America from all enemies, natural and supernatural, corporeal and incorporeal, quick and dead, at home, overseas, or in any dimension from which evil may strike. So help me God."

Greed: "Look, princess, all I want is the reward. All the prof wants is a sample of that thing's blood. And all the kid wants is, well, a little gratitude from you."

Morals: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. If we do not save the innocent, we have conspired with that which will destroy them."

Revenge: "Them vampires done kilt my brother, turned my gal, and run over my dog. Ain't nobody runs over my dog and lives, even iff'n they's already dead."

Self-Preservation: "This witch-cult killed the last four people who found out they exist. We'd better find out how to fight back, or spend the rest of our short lives hiding from cats."

Judicious use of Code of Honor (p. B127), Disciplines of Faith (p. B132), Duty (p. B133), Enemies (p. B135), Obsession (p. B146), Sense of Duty (p. B153), and Vow (p. B160) will let you model these motives during character creation, and net you some points in the bargain!

As for why you're in the graveyard *at night,* well, if people saw you carrying shotguns and jerry cans of gasoline into the graveyard during the day, they'd call the cops.

Party Design

Players often work together when designing their PCs, the goal in many cases being a balanced party. This makes a great deal of sense. A diverse group of heroes can solve a wider variety of problems, allowing the campaign to address a greater range of subjects. More practically, it can mean the difference between life and death for them all if one is a capable healer, scout, warrior, or whatever.

In horror, this kind of player teamwork can be valuable. Horror games frequently have an additional level of danger that clever character design can somewhat mitigate. It's even more useful on a dramatic level. If the players design the PCs with overlapping histories, or even linked character hooks, then it adds depth to the campaign world while giving everyone an important reason to work together.

Not all GMs will want to show their hand this early in the campaign, but it's an unusual GM who doesn't jump at the chance to work the heroes' backgrounds together in some way – even if the characters (or the players!) don't fully understand it yet.

The only thing to watch out for is a level of coordination that seems almost "too good to be true," especially for a batch of random strangers who just happen to meet in a tavern to fight elemental evils. Damage to the campaign's internal reality is damage to its ability to create fear. That said, the novel *Dracula* teams a lawyer (Jonathan Harker) and his wife (Mina Harker) with three suitors of his wife's vampirized girlfriend: an aristocrat (Lord Godalming), an explorer (Quincey Morris), and a doctor (Dr. Seward) who just happens to know personally an occultist who's the world's leading expert on vampires (Van Helsing). It looks unbelievable in this paragraph, but Stoker makes it work in his novel. The GM and players can make similarly jury-rigged groups seem believable if they're willing to put enough effort into their mutual backstory and the campaign background.

Against the Darkness: Heroes

Protagonists in horror fiction fall into two basic categories: investigators of the supernatural, and men on the street. In general, experienced investigators will be fairly capable, built on *at least* 150 points (and often considerably more). Man-on-the-street PCs might be 75- to 100-point "accidental heroes" sucked into the horror, but it fits the flavor of many stories better if they're 25- to 50-point "average Joes." Lower-powered PCs tend to flee in terror more realistically – and it's easier to frighten players who are concerned about their characters' fragility.

Just Plain Folks

In a man-on-the-street story, the hero usually *is* the monster's target. He has no background to prepare him for adventure; indeed, he lived a perfectly mundane, perhaps even boring, life until It turned Its baleful gaze upon him. In some tales, the protagonist never finds out *why* the Thing was after him – maybe there is no reason behind Its actions. Sometimes, though, a link between him and the monster becomes apparent.

This type of adventure features people from all walks of life: doctors, construction workers, housewives, students, etc. The one thing they likely have in common is a *lack* of familiarity with monsters, the occult, serial killers, or whatever. The members of *Poltergeist*'s Freling family were just Plain Folks, as were most of the victims sliced up in *Halloween* or run down by zombies in *Dawn of the Dead*. It's a good idea to establish some connection among the PCs, binding their fates to each other and to that of the monster. Perhaps they're all members of a single family haunted by ghosts, or guests at a remote resort besieged by werewolves. The details will depend on the adventure – a street gang fits into a zombies-in-the-subways adventure much better than a troop of Girl Scouts would. The Girl Scouts, contrariwise, would be preferable for a dark-fantastic "grim fairy tales" scenario.

These heroes usually have one goal: survival. This may be as simple as holding off the monster until dawn or as difficult as escaping from a deep, haunted swamp.

Working With the Other Players

In many games, the players compete – there are only so many gold pieces out there, after all, and everybody wants them. This can work even in horror roleplaying, but it's tactically much trickier. Competing players find it tempting to bicker; if the thief got the magic gloves that the healer wanted, the healer might not heal him. In horror, the party's enemies are stronger and more focused on the heroes than are the antagonists in most other genres. In a conventional fantasy campaign, the orcs usually stay in their dungeon; in horror fantasy, they stalk the adventurers through the alley shadows and serve a demon. Internal rivalry can mean a messy death for everyone.

Many groups require that every PC in a horror game be explicitly on the same side. This can mean that everyone takes "good" disadvantages (e.g., Honesty) and not "evil" ones (e.g., Sadism), shares an employer, or simply agrees that stopping evil is more important than rivalry. While this may seem limiting, it accurately reflects much horror fiction; it's true to the genre. It also makes tactical sense. The thief is too busy keeping an eye on the shadowy horrors to pick fights with the healer; the healer knows full well that if he doesn't heal the thief, nobody watches the party's back. This also lets the players focus on only one challenge: building an atmosphere of fear by getting into the GM's world.

Players shouldn't neglect *each other* while building the atmosphere of fear. Group fear feeds on itself; as long as all the players let the fear happen, or at least don't interfere with its development, the feeling intensifies for everyone. Sadly, group fear breaks easily. If the game becomes tense and scary, there's a natural impulse to break the tension somehow: Coke run, bad jokes, anything. Don't give in to that impulse – you not only cheat yourself out of the thrill of fear, you cheat the other players.

A handy way to keep yourself immersed in the game is to keep as much of the dialogue "in character" as possible, referring to the other players by their character names. Instead of saying, "Doug, can your psychic tell if this slab was used for human sacrifice?", try, "Armand, can your powers tell if this slab was used for human sacrifice?" It's a small thing, but it sometimes makes a big difference in helping everyone stay in the moment.

Either way, the PCs know that if they can just hang on long enough, they'll be safe. (The *players* may know that the PCs are doomed, of course!) Plain Folks have other problems, too. They're more likely to turn on each other, out of suspicion or panic, than are members of a trained team. This makes for excellent horror roleplaying opportunities, as movies from *Night of the Living Dead* to *The Thing* have shown us. Plain Folks are less likely to be experienced fighters; the GM may want to use the *Untrained Fighters* rules on p. 113 of ***GURPS Martial Arts.***

For all these reasons, Plain Folks work best in a one-shot adventure. Normal people aren't suited to extended contact with the uncanny; they simply lack the drive to seek out and combat man's most terrifying foes. On the other hand, it can be amusing to roleplay an average person facing a supernatural threat. And "average" doesn't mean incompetent; the big game hunter, the movie starlet, even the town sheriff are all average in this context, because they don't deal regularly with the supernatural. In fact, they might not even *believe* in ghosts and aliens until they come face-to-face with them – but when they do, things get interesting, fast.

An extended campaign, however, demands heroes in the Monster Hunter vein – no one else would go *looking* for supernatural trouble. If the PCs are Plain Folks, yet supernatural events keep seeking them out, then there's probably a Weirdness Magnet at work . . . or some story hook or connection between them that they haven't yet plumbed.

Monsters as Characters

In some campaigns, the protagonists *are* monsters: vampires, werewolves, ghosts, or the like. Such games don't necessarily revolve around the characters facing even more horrific enemies – although the "conventional" methods of horror can be useful in such situations and scenarios – but on the horror of their monstrous state. The emphasis is on the horrors of isolation and alienation, self-hatred, and angst.

These can be powerful themes when used carefully to prevent the campaign from becoming emotionally stale or monotonous. The GM can vary the game's feel by introducing other styles, by providing a wide variety of human (or other NPC) reactions to the PCs, or by occasionally emphasizing the paradoxical rewards of monstrousness – the beauties of the night, the glories of extra senses, and the feral joy of the hunt. Of course, if the GM too successfully removes the central horror of isolation and alienation, the result will be a more conventional "adventure" game, similar to a straight supers or pulp campaign.

In general, this style of campaign depends on the GM to maintain a sufficiently fearsome and intricate world background. The horrific nature of everything the protagonist perceives thus reinforces his own horrific nature: the world as metaphor for the soul. By battling the evils of the world (in suitably horrific fashion), he keeps the evils within his monstrous nature at bay, too. This interpretation can also work well with a psychological horror game; see *Psychological Horror* (pp. 125-126).

Fearless Monster Hunters

Where Plain Folks do anything to get away from horror, Fearless Monster Hunters go looking for it. This typically implies a campaign centered on the heroes' investigations into the paranormal. Obviously, such PCs are much better prepared to deal with occult threats. They usually have appropriate weapons – not the least of which is a working knowledge of supernatural beings, gained through either extensive research or firsthand experience.

Monster Hunters customarily become involved in an adventure after the haunting begins – they're called in to help with something beyond explanation. Some occult investigators charge for their services. Others are motivated by altruism or the quest for knowledge, hoping to eliminate a threat to mankind or increase humanity's grasp of the supernatural. If the heroes have incompatible goals, then conflict may result; e.g., the party's priest feels compelled to exorcise the demon, while their occultist wants to capture it for study.

Monster Hunters tend to gain enemies among the forces of the occult – particularly in a world in which the Cabal (p. 102) is strong. They might become involved in a long-running, two-way game of cat-and-mouse as they pursue a clever monster who wants them just as badly as they want It. If so, the investigators can never be sure whether they're closing in on their prey or walking into a cunning trap.

Traits

In a horror campaign more so than in other kinds of games, it's imperative that the players and GM get together *before* character creation to discuss supernatural advantages and disadvantages, skills that grant access to paranormal abilities or secret knowledge, available powers (in a high-powered or horrific-supers campaign), and so on. Below are some suggestions – but in the end, the GM's word is final.

Advantages

Certain advantages either work differently or require additional interpretation in a ***Horror*** campaign. Ask the GM before taking any exotic or supernatural trait – such abilities are often off-limits.

Affliction

see p. B35

Most Things that drive men mad can be modeled with Terror (p. B93), but for some, Affliction is a better fit. For example, monsters that always cause the same sort of insanity – Gray aliens inducing "screen memory" Delusions, incubi triggering Lecherousness, or a "rage virus" turning its victims Berserk – have Affliction with the Disadvantage enhancement. Likewise, if whatever personal madness the creature invokes always manifests with the same incapacitating symptom – Daze, Hallucinating, Paralysis, Seizure, or fainting Unconscious – then this is Affliction enhanced with Incapacitation. In most such cases, this advantage also carries the Based On Will (or IQ) enhancement, although a fungoid monster might give off clouds of hallucinatory spores resistible with HT, like normal Afflictions.

> *"What's the worst thing you've ever done?"*
>
> *"I won't tell you that, but I'll tell you the worst thing that ever happened to me."*
>
> *– Peter Straub,* ***Ghost Story***

Some sample Afflictions:

Curse (+365%): Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Cursed, +75%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [47]. *Notes:* Roll Will vs. subject's Will. Victory curses the victim until he achieves a notable success . . . at which time his success and the curse both evaporate. *47 points.*

Gaudivore (+191%/+175%): Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage: Killjoy, +15%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; Link, +10%; Malediction 1, +100%; Secondary Disadvantage, Chronic Depression (6), +6%) [30] + Leech 1 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Link, +10%; Malediction 1, +100%; Only Joy, -50%; Ranged, +40%; Steal FP, +50%) [69]. *Notes:* This attack drains the target's joy, transferring it to the attacker as FP. Roll Will vs. subject's Will; the attacker has -1 per yard of distance to his target. Victory means the victim loses the ability to experience pleasure for 10 minutes times the attacker's margin of victory; victory by 5+ means the target is depressed to the point of total apathy for the same period. In addition to these effects, the attacker can steal total FP (or HP, if the victim is at 0 FP) equal to his margin of victory, at the rate of 1 FP per second after the attack, without needing to roll again. These heal his FP. This is the only way he can use the included Leech advantage. *99 points.*

Horrifying Window (+140%/+320%): Affliction 1 (Always On, -20%; Based on Will, +20%; Hallucinating, +50%; Link, +10%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Trigger, Psionic Contact, -40%) [24] + Affliction 1 (Always On, -20%; Based on Will, +20%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; Link, +10%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Onset, -10%; Trigger, Nightmarish Vision, -40%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [42]. *Notes:* Excellent for Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, tormented ghosts or demons, and other outsiders! When someone makes telepathic contact with the Thing, he must roll Will vs. its Will. If he loses, he receives a nightmarish vision of the Thing's reality that lasts for minutes equal to his margin of loss. When this ends, reroll the Quick Contest; loss here means he faints away for 10 minutes times his margin of loss. *66 points.*

Leprous Touch (+135%): Affliction 1 (Contact Agent, -30%; Disadvantage, Terminally Ill, Up to two years, +50%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [24]. *Notes:* The attacker must touch his target's *bare skin.* The victim gets a HT roll to resist. Failure means he contracts leprosy. The touch leaves a dead, white mark. *24 points.*

Memory Wipe (+280%): Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Delusion, Significant Memory, +10%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Psionic, -10%; Selective Effect, +20%; Takes Extra Time 3, -30%) [38]. *Notes:* The attacker must concentrate on his target for 8 seconds and then roll Will vs. subject's Will. Victory lets him edit the victim's memories, replacing them with False Memories (p. 24). Selective Effect enables *specific* edits. To undo this effect, use shock therapy, hypnotism, Mind Control with Conditioning . . . or another Memory Wipe. *38 points.*

Minor Curse (+200%): Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Disadvantage, Unluckiness, +10%; Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [30]. *Notes:* Pay 2 FP and roll Will vs. subject's Will. The victim suffers from bad luck for 30 minutes times his margin of loss. *30 points.*

Nightmare (+80%): Affliction 1 (Accessibility, Only on sleeping subjects, -20%; Based on IQ, +20%; Contact Agent, -30%; Disadvantage, Nightmares (6), +10%; Malediction 1, +100%) [18]. *Notes:* The attacker must touch his sleeping target's *bare skin* and roll Will vs. subject's IQ. A victim who knows Dreaming (p. B188) may resist with that skill instead. If the sleeper loses, he suffers nightmares and must attempt a self-control roll. On a 7+, he loses 1 FP the next morning and may suffer worse effects; see p. B144. *18 points.*

Paralyzing Touch (+155%): Affliction 1 (Extended Duration, 3×, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Paralysis, +150%; Selective Effect, +20%) [26]. *Notes:* The victim must roll against HT if touched; DR gives its usual bonus. Failure means he suffers paralysis for three minutes times his margin of failure. Selective Effect lets the attacker touch specific hit locations in order to paralyze them. *26 points.*

Sleep (+370%): Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Contact Agent, -30%; Extended Duration, 100×, +80%; Malediction 1, +100%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [47]. *Notes:* The attacker must touch his target's *bare skin* and roll Will vs. subject's Will. The victim falls into a deep slumber and cannot be awakened for 100 minutes times the attacker's margin of victory (e.g., five hours, if the attacker wins by 3). *47 points.*

Afflictions can come in higher levels, giving -1 to resist per level past the first. Don't simply multiply cost by level, though! Apply the parenthetical modifiers above to the 10 points/level for Affliction. For example:

- Leprous Touch 2 [47] (*not* [48]) makes the resistance roll HT-1.
- Memory Wipe 3 [114] means the victim resists with Will-2.
- Nightmare 3 [54] means the victim resists with IQ-2 or Dreaming-2.
- Paralyzing Touch 2 [51] (*not* [52]) makes the resistance roll HT-1.

Additional variations are possible. Consider these two for Horrifying Window (p. 12):

Blasphemously Horrifying Window: Affliction 1 (Horrifying Window, +140%) [24] + Affliction 3 (Horrifying Window, +320%) [126]. *Notes:* This befits a normally psionic Thing from a particularly horrifying dimension, or a demon with more imagination than power. The victim's initial resistance roll is at full Will, but he resists fainting at Will-2. *150 points.*

Horrifying Wide Window: Affliction 3 (Horrifying Window, +140%) [72] + Affliction 1 (Horrifying Window, +320%) [42]. *Notes:* By contrast, this models a Thing with a greater psionic strength than even its (usually) enormous Will indicates, but from a "normal" hell-dimension. The victim's initial resistance roll is at Will-2, but he resists fainting at full Will. *114 points.*

Or these Memory Wipe (p. 12) variants:

Memory Wipe Gizmo (+225%): Affliction 3 (Based on Will, +20%; Breakable, DR 6, Machine, SM -9, -15%; Can Be Stolen, Quick Contest of ST, -30%; Disadvantage, Delusion, Significant Memory, +10%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Selective Effect, +20%; Takes Extra Time 3, -30%; Vision-Based, -20%) [98]. *Notes:* The attacker must shine this tiny wand's light into the victim's eyes for 8 seconds and roll Will vs. subject's Will-2. *98 points.*

Memory Wipe Mantra (+250%): Affliction 2 (Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Delusion, Significant Memory, +10%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Hearing-Based, -20%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Selective Effect, +20%; Takes Extra Time 3, -30%; Vision-Based, -20%) [70]. *Notes:* The attacker must make eye contact *and* program the memetic "screen memory" in a specific intonation for 8 seconds, and then roll Will vs. subject's Will-1. *70 points.*

Blessed

see p. B40

Not only *good* deities grant favors to their worshippers, of course. An individual may be "blessed" by a dark or evil entity – possibly even against his will! Those blessed by such gods, or by horrific Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, may acquire an unsavory Reputation or even worse disadvantages. At the very least, such a blessing will be Uncontrollable (p. B116).

Channeling

see p. B41

This advantage can offer great opportunities – and dangers – in a horror campaign. A channeler can learn a lot from a recent kill, perhaps even the nature or species of monster responsible. The GM who fears that this might derail investigative adventures should make sure that plenty of malevolent spirits are hanging around too-willing channelers, if only to make the player sweat before opening up his investigator to the unseen. Similar caveats apply to Medium (p. B68) and Psychometry (p. B78).

Note as well that if one of the *PCs* is a ghost who must otherwise pay FP to speak, a channeler in the party will let him participate more meaningfully in the campaign.

New Special Enhancement

Aware: You remain aware of the world when using your ability, and can move and act normally while spirits speak through you. +50%.

Clerical Investment

see p. B43

In most medieval folklore, only an ordained priest (or a saint) can banish demons, exorcise spirits, and so forth. In the typical horror campaign, by contrast, True Faith (p. B94) is needed to use faith as a "weapon," and this advantage gives no special powers per se when combating horrific supernatural beings. Clerical Investment does legitimize useful skills such as Exorcism (p. B193), Religious Ritual (p. B217), and (in more conspiratorial campaigns) even Hidden Lore (p. B199), however, and may potentially give access to consecrated ground, holy water, church records, or blasphemous tomes locked away from the less-godly laymen.

Contacts

see p. B44

By building and using Contacts, the players can help co-create the world of a horror campaign. The GM should reward this by making Contacts useful – even an unreliable or foolish Contact can provide valuable clues accidentally, or advance the story by revealing something that turns out to be a trap. Contacts also make great victims of the horror, since the PCs have a previous relationship with them, adding extra "reality" to their death. (Of course, the GM should replace murdered Contacts as soon as practicable without charging extra points.) In a thoroughgoing supernatural horror campaign, the GM may want to relax the rule adding 1 point to the cost of Contacts who can obtain information using supernatural means.

Two additional classes of Contacts are especially appropriate for horror campaigns:

Collector. Dealers in (or producers of) rare or collectible items, many of which might have occult significance. In a setting with pervasive supernatural content, there will be an "occult collectibles" market, just as the real world has many collectors of serial-killer memorabilia. Specific items might include antiques, old magical equipment, funerary jewelry, weapons, books, or magical herbs.

Such Contacts can provide information about items, other collectors, upcoming conventions, who needs cash fast, and who always seems to find the best goods. Typical skills – aside from the obvious Occultism – include Connoisseur (Occult Items) and Current Affairs (Occult Underground). A bottom-feeder or someone in a small market has effective skill 12; a major broker has effective skill 15; a respected authority in the field or the main player in a large market has effective skill 18; and the undisputed top collector has effective skill 21.

Supernatural. Figures within the campaign world's "supernatural community" – both supernatural creatures (and their minions) and those who oppose them. For example, in a setting featuring the Cabal (p. 102), this includes Cabalists and "clued-in" anti-magic operatives; in one where a secret clique of vampires rules from behind the scenes, this consists of the vampires, their servitors, and vampire-hunters. Likely skills include supernaturally flavored Streetwise (e.g., which cops are "vampire-aware," or who's trading ghost-smoke in Englewood), Current Affairs (Supernatural), and Savoir-Faire with suitable specialties (the Cabal, Vampires, etc.). Contacts with more standard skills (Forensics, Intelligence Analysis, Politics, etc.) might also have supernatural access in such a background. A "street level" mage or monster with few contacts of his own has effective skill 12; a "wired-in" member of either a supernatural group (e.g., an Adept or higher in the Cabal) or its opponents (e.g., an FBI agent on the "uncanny murder and UFO conspiracy" beat) has effective skill 15; and a major figure in the campaign world (e.g., the vampire lord of Prague, Governor Morgan of Jamaica, or the high priest of the Lord Beneath the Ice) has effective skill 21.

Damage Resistance

see p. B46

Some creatures' supernatural armor fails against specific attacks; e.g., a silver sword might cut a werewolf's thick hide like butter, or a specific wavelength of light may burn through an alien's chitinous integument.

New Special Limitation

Bane: Your DR doesn't protect you from a specific attack or material. The limitation value depends on the bane's rarity (p. B46): -15% for a "Very Common" flaw, -10% for a "Common" one, or -5% for an "Occasional" one. Failure against something "Rare" is merely a quirk.

Fearlessness

see p. B55

In horror campaigns that intend both to create fear within the players and to depict its effects on the PCs, this advantage tends to dampen the fun. Games of psychological or cosmic horror require the heroes to be genuinely terrified, where pulp horror or conventional monster-hunting campaigns can take full advantage of a "fearless vampire hunter." As with any game element, consider whether this trait works for or against the mood and theme you're trying to construct and maintain. For much more on this topic, see *Stress and Derangement* (pp. 141-142).

Higher Purpose

see p. B59

Slayers (p. 43) receive a Higher Purpose to aid them against their foes. This doesn't necessarily imply a supernatural ability or a destiny; it might simply represent intensive training at monster-slaying. The slayer must pick *one* class of prey per Higher Purpose: Aliens, Demons, Lycanthropes, Mutants, Undead, etc. He gets +1 on *all* rolls – attack, defense, damage, resistance, etc. – made when battling such creatures.

Multiple levels of Higher Purpose are possible. These can extend the bonus to several categories of foes; e.g., Higher Purpose (Slay Demons and Undead) [10] gives +1 vs. demons *and* undead. Moreover, a slayer can take up to three levels against the *same* group for a higher bonus; e.g., Higher Purpose 3 (Slay Undead) [15], for +3 vs. undead.

Injury Tolerance

see p. B60

Many demonic or other monstrous entities can become (or are composed of) a swarm of something – bats, centipedes, flies, rats, spiders, worms, etc. This is Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) with some specific fillips.

For an entirely new form of Injury Tolerance, see *Independent Body Parts* (p. 15).

New Special Enhancements

These enhancements apply to Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) only. The Swarm modifier in ***GURPS Powers*** is a combination of Infiltration and Scatter.

Body of Swarm: You can become a swarm (p. B461) of gnat- to rat-sized bodies. This moves at your best applicable Move; can bite, sting, etc. for thrust crushing damage for your ST; and is dispersed by injury equal to your HP. A dispersed swarm is effectively "unconscious" and unable to act in concert. A determined foe might contain and continue to damage your dispersed bodies, though. Should you reach -HP, enough of your bodies have been killed to dissociate your consciousness and kill you! +0% for rat- or bat-sized bodies; +40% for cockroach- or gnat-sized bodies with full Infiltration.

Flying Swarm: Requires Body of Swarm. While in swarm form, your component bodies can fly. Air Move is twice Basic Speed. +30%.

Humanoid Form: Requires Body of Swarm. You can assemble your component bodies into any vaguely manlike form, giving you a limited ability to "morph" (although you won't pass close inspection). +50%.

Infiltration: Your body is a fluid. It can filter or flow through the tiniest of holes. In addition to the normal benefits of Diffuse, you can ooze through porous barriers and narrow cracks and keyholes. You can't shapeshift, stretch abnormally, or sprout new body parts – just seep under doors, or through screens, ventilation grates, clothing (2 seconds), chinks in armor (5 seconds), etc. +40%.

Scatter: Requires Body of Swarm. You can scatter your component bodies by taking a Concentrate maneuver; your outer perimeter travels at your best applicable Move.

Independent Body Parts

If you have this form of Injury Tolerance (pp. 14-15), your limbs and extremities are separate entities. When struck there, don't apply injury to your HP. Instead, apply it to that body part's HP score: your HP/3 for an extremity or HP/2 for a limb (round up).

Attacks injure body parts normally with one exception: a *cutting* attack that would cripple a limb or extremity costs you the use of that part (see p. B421) but inflicts no injury on you or it. Instead, it severs the body part, which falls to the ground and fights as your ally! An extremity separates from its limb, while a limb separates from your torso.

Body parts have your HT. Size Modifier is your own, adjusted by the part's hit location modifier. Other abilities are as follows:

Arms: An arm has your DX, a Move of your ST/4, and a Dodge of DX/2 + 3. It uses your ST for striking or strangling, ST/2 for grappling or dragging things. If it has a hand, it can punch or grapple (but only the feet or legs of a standing foe), or wield a one-handed weapon at -2 damage. If it lacks a hand, it can club for punching damage.

Leg: A leg with a foot has DX equal to your DX-2. Move is your Basic Move-3, while Dodge is your DX/2 + 3. It can leap up and kick foes for full damage. Treat a leg without a foot as an arm without a hand, but at -2 DX.

Hand: A severed hand has your DX, Move equal to DX/2, and a Dodge of DX/2 + 3. Its only effective attack is to crawl up someone's body (treat this as a grapple) and strangle – see p. B370. The hand has your *full* ST for this purpose only.

Foot: A foot has DX equal to your DX-2, Move 1, and Dodge 4. Its only useful combat ability is to trip those who try to pass it. A fighter who tries to run past the foot must evade (see p. B368), and *falls down* if the foot wins.

Round all fractions *up*. Where combat skills would matter, apply your relative skill level to the body part's DX.

A severed body part suffers injury normally from every attack but the one that severed it. At 0 or fewer HP, it's crippled and can't act. Make the usual HT roll to learn whether this is permanent (see p. B422).

You may reattach body parts by holding them in place for a minute. You can reattach crippled body parts if the injury is temporary or lasting, but they remain crippled. Permanently crippled body parts are destroyed.

One final perk: should you die, the severed part lives on, and continues to attack your enemies!

Independent Body Parts costs 35 points.

Special Modifiers

Detachable Head: Your *head* uses these rules, too. A cutting attack to the neck that inflicts full HP or more decapitates you without injury. Your head has your DX and HT, HP/2, and Move and Dodge 0. It can bite at full ST in close combat. If your head is your seat of consciousness, your body fights as its ally. If it isn't (for instance, if you have No Brain), it fights as an ally of your body. +15%.

Instant Reattachment: You only have to hold body parts in place for a *second* to reattach them. +50%.

No Reattachment: Your severed body parts are animated, but you can't reattach them. You can't combine this with Instant Reattachment. -60%.

Reattachment Only: Your body parts are inert when severed. Severing them causes you no injury, and you can reattach them, but they can't fight for you. You can't combine this with No Reattachment. -50%.

Your constituent bodies can communicate instantly and work in a coordinated fashion over a half-mile radius (buy Area Effect to change this). While scattered, only area-effect, cone, and explosion attacks can injure you, and only in proportion to the area they blanket; e.g., an attack that covers just 5% of your area does 5% of its normal damage. You can focus your senses on any point within your area; changing viewpoints requires a Ready maneuver. Otherwise, treat this state as Insubstantiality (p. B62). +40% if you can't affect the material world while scattered; +120% if you can.

New Special Limitations

These limitations are for Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) only.

Misty: You can become a fog or a mist. While Diffuse, you cannot affect the material world in any meaningful way. You cannot speak, attack, or even block others' sightlines. You drift at half your normal Move. Though immune to most attacks, you're still material; you can be affected by strong winds, powerful suction, etc. Misty includes Infiltration. -20% if you can use magic or psi in mist form; -40% if not.

Tenuous Form: Requires Body of Swarm. You must make a conscious effort to maintain cohesion. Whenever you suffer injury or fail a HT roll, make a Will roll. Failure means your body collapses into a normal swarm of its component creatures. To reform, you must concentrate for seconds equal to the injury taken or the margin of failure on the HT roll. Additional damage to the swarm while reforming adds to the total time needed. -50%.

Innate Attack

see p. B61

Not everything is claws and tentacles. Some other Innate Attacks include:

Pestilence (+1,560%): Fatigue Attack 1 point (Based on HT, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 6 FP, -30%; Cyclic, 1 hour, 72 cycles, Highly Contagious, +1,470%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%) [50].

Notes: Costs 6 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. Victory means that after an hour, the victim becomes ill. He loses 1 FP/hour for three days, and is infectious during this time. Remember that at 0 FP, each FP lost saps 1 HP. *50 points*.

Plague (+323%): Toxic Attack 1d-2 (Always On, -20%; Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Blood Agent, +100%; Cyclic, 6 hours, 13 cycles, Resistible, Highly Contagious, +140%; Emanation, -20%; Onset, 1d+1 days, -30%; Resistible, HT-2, -20%; Symptoms, 1/3 HP, Severe Pain and Unnatural Features 1, +123%) [9]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT-2 roll 1d+1 days after exposure and every six hours for three days. Each failure inflicts 1d-2 injury. Those who lose 1/3 HP or more become seriously ill: Severe Pain and grotesque purple swellings until healed. *9 points*.

Strong Venom (+100%): Toxic Attack 3d-1 (Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Follow-Up, Teeth/Striker, +0%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 ST, DX, IQ, and HT, +90%) [22]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT-4 roll a minute after injection and hourly for three hours. Each failure inflicts 3d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more become seriously ill: -3 to all attributes until healed. *22 points*.

Insubstantiality

see p. B62

Some new options are handy for modeling spirits and ghostly undead.

New Special Enhancements

Reversion: Pick one form, substantial or insubstantial, as "native." (Unless otherwise specified, a spirit's native form is insubstantial.) While in the *other* form, you cannot be killed by perils incapable of injuring your native form; e.g., physical weapons, if natively immaterial. If such injury would reduce you to 0 or fewer HP, you go to 0 HP and revert to your native form, where you must remain until fully healed. Reversion isn't effective against things that *can* harm your native form – specially designed weapons, your own Vulnerabilities, etc. – which can take you below 0 HP. +60%.

Touch: While you can't physically manipulate solid objects, you *can* "touch" them to create a ghostly sense of warmth, cold, or pressure. Living things can feel you brush over or past them with a Touch roll. +0% if always on; +5% if switchable.

New Special Limitations

Difficult Materialization: Materialization costs you 1 FP/minute. This lesser version of Usually On is mutually exclusive with that limitation. -20%.

Ectoplasmic Materialization: You materialize as ectoplasm rather than as normal matter. While you can touch and affect the material world, you aren't fully material. Your ectoplasmic body has DR 0, HP 1, regardless of your spirit stats. On the upside, it has Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood); see p. B60. -35%.

No Vertical Move: You can't disregard gravity. You must move across a horizontal or gently sloping (no Climbing roll needed) surface. However, you leave no footprints and can walk on the surface of a body of water. -10%.

Noisy: You make noise when moving, just as a solid being might. While you can pass through trees or walk over wooden floors without touching them, you still rustle or rap when you do. -5%.

Projection: You become insubstantial as a spirit or psionic entity, leaving your body behind. It has no consciousness until you return to it. Your Move is twice Basic Speed, as if flying. Normally, you start out where your physical body is – but if you have the ability to perceive a distant place, you can materialize there, and if you can see some immaterial realm such as the spirit world, you can enter it. Your consciousness remains linked to your body by a "silver cord"; you won't notice physical sensations, but should anything threaten the link between your body and your immaterial form, you'll be drawn back instantly. This includes attempts at mental or spiritual possession of your body, and any physical injury that requires a HT roll to survive. -50%.

Jumper

see p. B64

Some jumpers can enter other planes or realms instead of jumping between parallel worlds. Details depend on campaign cosmology; e.g., the astral plane, the spirit realm, and Dreamland might be three separate places or the same thing. Such realms may have *any* sort of rules – game-mechanical and/or dramatic. In certain settings (especially in cosmic horror or other "hard SF" horror), merely activating Insubstantiality puts you in the spirit realm; in backgrounds with no *other* higher (or lower!) planes that PCs can enter, ignore this new version of Jumper.

Jumper (Spirit): You can *bodily* move to and from "spirit worlds" such as the astral plane. In these realms, you are a spirit – you can interact normally with other spirits, are affected by anything that would affect a spirit, and can use any ability the world's laws allow. To initiate the transition, use the standard rules for Jumper. Each attempt costs 1 FP. Success on the IQ roll means you shift between realms, while failure means you stay in your current world and have -5 to use your ability again in the next 10 minutes. Critical failure results are up to the GM . . . you might attract evil spirits, end up adrift between worlds, or go to the *wrong place* (e.g., Hell). The special modifiers for Jumper (World) are available to you, although not all of these are meaningful in every setting. *100 points*.

New Special Limitations

These limitations may apply to certain forms of Jumper, depending on the campaign metaphysics.

Limited Access: For Jumper (World) or (Spirit). You can only jump between two *particular* worlds – Earth and Faërie, the material world and Hell, the waking world and Dreamland, etc. The size of this limitation depends on how many additional worlds exist in the setting. If there's only one, it's meaningless (-0%). If there are many, it might be worth -20% or more, at the GM's discretion.

Projection: You travel not physically but psychically – although not necessarily *psionically.* Your body falls unconscious and a projection of yourself appears at the destination.

Your body remains in the physical world, vulnerable to material threats; if it dies, you're trapped outside it forever. Your projected form is visible but intangible, as if you were using Insubstantiality, and subject to anything that would affect insubstantial entities. If you have Insubstantiality, you can "reverse" it in order to become solid; if you have Possession (Spiritual, -20%), you can possess a resident of the target realm. -50% if you cannot affect your destination at all *without* Insubstantiality or Possession; -0% if your projection can affect your destination with spells, mental abilities, and Maledictions.

Medium

see p. B68

In the Victorian Spiritualist tradition from which this advantage derives, mediums could only *hear* spirits that didn't take ectoplasmic form. To improve on this, use the special enhancements below. Like most tribal shamans, Victorian mediums – and their successors in ghost fiction and in Brazilian Kardecist and Umbandist religion – required a ceremony (*séance*) to communicate with spirits. Model this with Preparation Required.

Medium can't *force* spirits to become visible or solid against their will. For that, buy an Affliction (p. B35) that cancels Invisibility or Insubstantiality via Negated Advantage. If this only affects spirits or certain kinds of spirits, add an Accessibility limitation.

Materializing spirits sometimes create their ectoplasm from the medium's body. Add Costs Fatigue to Medium with Manifestation – or to the above Affliction – to model this.

New Special Enhancements

Manifestation: Your presence makes it easier for spirits to become visible, if they wish. As long as they're within a yard of you, those with the Spirit meta-trait (p. B263) needn't pay the 1 FP per second demanded by the Usually On limitation on their Invisibility. +100%.

Universal: You can communicate with *any* spirit you can sense with Medium, even those with whom you don't share a language. +50%.

Visual: You can *see* spirits while communicating with them, even if they would normally be invisible. +50%.

Mind Control

see p. B68

The first great horror film villain, Dr. Caligari, was a mind-controller. Since then, the field has only gotten more crowded. Below are some variations.

New Special Enhancement

Independent: Your Mind Control doesn't require ongoing attention. If it works, you're free to do other things. You must still concentrate to initiate control, but you can't claim the +2 or +4 for lengthy concentration. If the victim fails to resist, control persists for one minute per point by which he lost the Quick Contest; you can't maintain it indefinitely by concentrating. These drawbacks are minor next to the benefits. First, only an attempt to force the subject to act against his principles can break control; you're "out of the loop" already, so incapacitating you changes *nothing*. Second, since your attention isn't divided, each contact is separate from all others; there's no -1 per slave, and critical failure with one victim doesn't free the rest. +70%.

New Special Limitations

Emotion Control: You can't control the subject's *actions*, just his feelings. For some guidelines on what's possible, see the Sway Emotions skill (p. B192). Mutually exclusive with Conditioning Only and Suggestion. -50%.

One Emotion Only: As Emotion Control, but produces one specific emotion. -80%.

Suggestion: You can't command the subject to take specific actions – you can only suggest a *general* course of action. Effects are as for the Suggest skill (p. B191). Mutually exclusive with Conditioning Only, Emotion Control, and One Emotion Only. -40%.

Night Vision

see p. B71

As an advantage, Night Vision is the ability to see under low-light conditions as well as in good illumination. However, being able to see better at night than at day – because daylight dazzles you – is a 0-point feature, found for example in orcs and owls. Specify your Night Vision level as usual. You see normally at that lighting level, but suffer -1 to Vision and visually guided tasks per level by which your environment is either dimmer *or* brighter. You still can't see in *total* darkness.

Example: Morlocks have Night Vision 6 as a feature. In darkness that would give ordinary humans -6 (roughly a moonlit night), they can see perfectly. In conditions that would normally give -3 or -9, their Vision penalty is -3. Under full daylight, it's -6. In total darkness, they're blind.

Patrons

see p. B72

In games of conspiratorial horror – and perhaps in more conventional campaigns involving a secretive occult or supernatural world beneath or inside our own – the PCs may have a "false-flagged" Patron. For example, the heroes might assume that they work for the CIA when they actually report to a reclusive vampire who has pulled the strings of the Federal Government since 1923. If a player has paid points for this advantage, the GM should leave the onus of forcibly altering the relationship on the player; a false-flagged Patron, even a supernatural or horrific one, won't turn against a valuable tool without provocation. Such a Patron often (but not always) has the Secret limitation.

Possession

see p. B75

To possess *and animate* a corpse, room, statue, pile of leaves, or other inanimate and unpowered form requires both Possession with the Spiritual limitation *and* Telekinesis with the Animation limitation (p. 19). A generous GM may allow you to possess a corpse and speak with its mouth without Telekinesis.

Regeneration

see p. B80

Creatures with supernatural recovery rates might not heal all damage equally, or may simply recover from exhaustion more quickly.

New Special Limitations

Bane: You can't regenerate injury from a particular source. Limitation value depends on the attack's rarity: -10% if "Rare," -30% if "Occasional," or -50% if "Common" or "Very Common." This limitation can apply to Regrowth (p. B80) with one additional option: Either you cannot regrow parts lost to a specific kind of damage, *or* you cannot regrow parts if the stump is exposed to a specific substance (e.g., fire) – your choice.

Fatigue Only: Only for Fast or better Regeneration. Your ability restores FP *instead of* HP, at the listed rate. It has no effect on injury, and doesn't include Rapid Healing. -0%.

See Invisible

see p. B83

Like Invisibility (p. B63), this is a separate advantage for each kind of invisibility. The buyer must choose *either* a type of perception (Electromagnetic, Sonar), a power source (Divine, High-Tech, Psionic, Spirit), or a descriptive category (Cloaking Devices, Deception, Ghosts).

If he chooses a descriptive category, he can see anyone using Invisibility described that way, regardless of other details. See Invisible (Deception) makes him immune to invisibility through mental influence, be it chi-based or psionic; See Invisible (Ghosts) lets him see specters, whether their invisibility stems from magic, spirit powers, or something else; and so on.

If he selects a source, then all that matters is the power modifier on Invisibility. For instance, See Invisible (Psionic) can defeat electrokinetic light-bending *and* telepathic mind-bending, while See Invisible (Spirit) works on anyone using spirit powers to become invisible . . . but not those using *magical* invisibility, even if they happen to be spirits.

Traditional abilities may combine several advantages:

Second Sight: See Invisible (Faerie; Link, +10%; Magical, -10%; Unconscious Only, -20%; Uncontrollable, -10%) [11] + See Invisible (Ghosts; Link, +10%; Magical, -10%; Unconscious Only, -20%; Uncontrollable, -10%) [11] + Precognition (Link, +10%; Magical, -10%; No Danger Sense, -60%; Passive Only, -20%) [5]. *Notes:* The traditional Scottish *Darna Shealladh,* or "second sight," makes little distinction between "the fairies showed me what would happen," "I saw your ghost before you died," and more conventional apparitions. It is a gift of the fairies, but doesn't use spirit interlocutors, so it's better modeled with Magical (treat as Mana Sensitive, p. B34). Those with the Sight can often see their own death, but not in the tactically useful way Danger Sense models. *27 points.*

In settings like early medieval Scotland in which fairies *are* ghosts (or vice versa), this ability is worth only 16 points.

Shapeshifting

see p. B83

For a form the PC can *never* control – especially one that commits serial murder in classic *Wolf Man* style – the GM may allow a third Shapeshifting option.

Disadvantageous Alternate Form

You shift uncontrollably into a form that's an NPC enemy under GM control. This is a disadvantage worth -10 points multiplied for trigger condition rarity, evaluated using the categories for Weakness (p. B161); "the full moon" is Rare. The *form's* point value only matters if it's greater than your native one *and* the GM feels it's exploitable (e.g., your transformed self eats your foes before your friends). If so, read disadvantage value as a positive percentage (so 5%, 10%, 20%, or 30%), and add that fraction of the point-value difference between your base and shifted templates, rounded up, as a *positive* cost.

New Special Limitations

With the plethora of werewolves, demons, and alien Things that shapeshift, a few new limitations come in handy.

Cannot Memorize Forms: Only for Morph. You can't memorize the forms you copy. To assume a form, you must always be able to see or touch the original. -50%.

Flawed: Only for Morph. Every form you take is cosmetically imperfect in some way, which *completely* precludes impersonation. You still gain the abilities of your new form. Flawed is mutually incompatible with Cosmetic. -10%.

Needs Sample: Only for Morph. You must physically sample anything you wish to take the form of. If your target is living, this sample must be *fresh* – you can't sample a rotting corpse. -5% if you need only touch the target; -15% if you require a drop of blood, strand of hair, etc.; -50% if you must eat the whole target.

Projected Form: Only for Alternate Form. Your Alternate Form is a separate entity – perhaps a physical manifestation of your soul. When you use your ability, your native form falls into a trance and your Alternate Form appears within 10 yards. To return to your native form and awaken, your Alternate Form must be within 10 yards of your entranced body. While entranced, your Alternate Form is a real, physical entity; if *either* form is wounded or killed, the same happens to the other! -50%.

Skinbound: Only for Alternate Form. You assume your Alternate Form by donning the skin of a creature of that type, which is absorbed into your body in the process. Alternatively, you take off the skin of your base form, which you must keep safe if you're to change back. Buy either version as a set of gadget limitations, but *halve* their total value, as they apply only in one shape. The skin can be either an organic part of your body, which you're supernaturally able to separate from yourself, or an artifact with uncanny powers.

Supernatural Durability

see p. B89

Folklore offers lots of different ways to kill the supernatural, and almost as many ways to *keep* them killed. Apply the Hindrance limitation for Unkillable (p. B95) to reflect, for example, a vampire who can't return if his remains lie in running water.

> *You have to have faith for that to work on me, Mr. Vincent.*
>
> *– Jerry Dandridge, in* ***Fright Night***

Talent

see p. B89

For general rules governing Talents, see the ***Basic Set.*** New Talents germane to ***Horror*** are:

Antiquary: Architecture, Connoisseur, Heraldry, History, Literature, and Research. *Reaction bonus:* devotees of the old and beautiful. *5 points/level.*

Cunning Folk: Animal Handling, Fortune-Telling, Herb Lore, Naturalist, Occultism, Poisons, Veterinary, and Weather Sense. *Reaction bonus:* local peasantry, clients, and acolytes. *10 points/level.*

Devotion: Autohypnosis, Exorcism, Meditation, and Religious Ritual. *Reaction bonus:* members of your faith, and those sympathetic to it. *5 points/level.*

Mesmerist: Autohypnosis, Brainwashing, Captivate, Gesture, Hypnotism, Intimidation, Musical Influence, Persuade, Suggest, and Sway Emotions. *Reaction bonus:* the foolish and weak-minded. *10 points/level.*

Occultist: Alchemy, Anthropology, Archaeology, Exorcism, Hidden Lore, History, Linguistics, Literature, Occultism, Research, Ritual Magic, and Thaumatology. *Reaction bonus:* students of the arcane, gullible college students, monster-hunters. *10 points/level.*

Poet: Connoisseur (Literature), Literature, Poetry, Public Speaking, and Writing. *Reaction bonus:* readers and listeners of your work, literati. *5 points/level.*

Telekinesis

see p. B92

Poltergeists and other haunts sometimes use this ability, as do a great many cinematic demons and witches.

New Special Limitation

Demons and other spirits who possess *and animate* inanimate, unpowered shells such as corpses have Telekinesis with the following limitation:

Animation: Your TK works by enabling inanimate objects to flex and move. The minimum level required to animate something equals its HP if Unliving (e.g., corpse or unpowered android), HP/2 if Homogenous (e.g., statue, mannequin, or one wall of a haunted room), or HP/4 if Diffuse (e.g., pile of leaves or pool of swamp scum); see *Object Hit Points Table* (p. B558). An animated object can grab, lift, strike, and throw with ST equal to the TK level needed to animate it. It has your DX. It can walk and jump if it isn't fixed in place; Move equals your TK level minus the level needed to animate it. You can use skills through animated items – but note that objects other than statues and corpses usually have No Fine Manipulators. Objects return to their rest state once you relinquish control. Your TK can't reach *inside* things at all. -30% if the object can't fly; -20% if it can, provided it has wings, rotors, etc. (like a harpy corpse or a model helicopter).

True Faith

see p. B94

True Faith is useless against Things Man Was Not Meant To Know in most cosmic horror campaigns, predicated as such games are on the notion that mankind and his gods are meaningless specks in the void. Ghouls, vampires, and other undead may exist in such a background – and be equally immune to True Faith. The GM should discourage players from buying *completely* useless advantages, where possible, without giving away too many surprises in the plot.

Unfazeable

see p. B95

Like Fearlessness, this advantage can work against the mood of some horror campaigns – if only because players who truly roleplay it may well wind up with dead characters! If the GM allows it in a full-bore horror game, he should require at least a 5-point Unusual Background. It is, however, especially appropriate for monsters-as-characters campaigns (p. 11); the GM might choose to call for Fright Checks against torch-wielding mobs or angry FBI agents armed with activated-charcoal bullets, and the Unfazeable vampire is the one who doesn't flinch or duck behind the sarcophagus.

If Unfazeable is allowed in a game of thoroughgoing cosmic horror, it merely grants +8 to Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks (see *Stress and Derangement,* pp. 141-142). Otherwise, it works normally.

As a twist, the GM could restrict this trait to heroes who are too jaded, ignorant, stupid, or crazy to be scared. He might even require anyone who wishes to possess it to have an appropriate mental disadvantage (or substandard IQ, which amounts to the same thing) – and rule that curing the disadvantage also neutralizes Unfazeable. In this regard, Unfazeable isn't so much an advantage as it is a coping mechanism: On one hand, you don't have to worry about Fright Checks; on the other hand, you carry psychological baggage that can be just as detrimental.

New Special Limitation

Familiar Horrors: You're unfazed by horrors you know already, but the new and alien can still get a rise out of you! A callous former mercenary may be Unfazeable at the sight of a bloody corpse – or even a zombie ("It's just a walking corpse.") – but a horrific Thing From Beyond or a giant spectral rat might still give him the jim-jams. -50%.

Warp

see p. B97

In every slasher movie, there's the moment when the camera looks away – and the killer is gone! He's slipped into the closet, or the air vent, or the shed, seemingly without ever opening the door. Model this as follows:

Ghostly Movement: Warp (Accessibility, Only if unobserved, -20%; Accessibility, Only places you could walk/climb to, given time, -20%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Medium, +20%; Range Limit, -50%) [30]. *Notes:* Requires a Move maneuver in combat. You can get anywhere within Move yards, provided that nobody is looking *and* that you could have gotten there "the hard way," given sufficient time. For example, you could move from the floor of an office into the heating vent above you, with the grate closed behind you, in a second. As a special effect, any mundane requirements for getting from A to B *replace* Warp's usual success roll, and Warp fails if you can't meet them; e.g., if you would need a Lockpicking roll, you must know Lockpicking, while if you would have to unscrew a bolt, you require a wrench. The GM decides whether this is "actual" Warp, some sort of super-speed, or simply a special effect of being a psycho killer. *30 points.*

New Advantages

Ghosts, vampires, and kindred horrors demand two new advantages.

Energy Reserve

3 points/level

Demons that gain power from Hell, necromancers who seek out charnel houses for their black energies, ghosts that strengthen and solidify in their ancestral crypt – all of these beings draw on special "power supplies" to fuel their abilities. To represent this, buy Fatigue Points at the usual 3 points apiece but treat them as a new "Energy Reserve" (ER) advantage. This is *always* tied to a particular power source; e.g., 10 FP for psi powers is "ER 10 (Psi) [30]."

An ER can only power abilities of the same source. It can pay the basic FP costs to use advantages, those added by Costs Fatigue, and expenditures for extra effort. It can also fuel related *skills;* e.g., ER (Magical) can energize spells.

However, an ER isn't the *same* as FP. Only associated powers can deplete it. Fatigue Attacks, missed sleep, and so on don't sap it, and other powers, unmodified advantages, and ordinary extra effort can't tap it. Furthermore, depleting an ER causes none of the effects of going below 1/3 FP – and having a full ER doesn't protect against those effects.

An ER recharges by one point every 10 minutes, independent of rest. You can recover FP at the same time if you rest. Factors that alter FP recovery generally have no effect on ER recharge rate.

Skills connected to the ER's source *can* help replenish it. For instance, the Recover Energy spell (p. B248) improves the recharge rate of ER (Magic). Abilities *of that source* can also help. Damage Resistance with Absorption can heal ER, FP, or HP for the usual +80%. Leech (below) can have "Heals ER" or "Only Heals ER" for the price of "Heals FP" or "Only Heals FP." Regeneration can have "ER Only" for the price of "Fatigue Only," and often has an Accessibility limitation such as "Only in direct sunlight" (-10%), "Only on holy days or in holy places" (-40%), or "Only inside a nuclear reactor" (-80%).

Special Limitations

Abilities Only: Your ER can only pay the basic FP costs of your abilities. It's of no use for extra effort. -10%.

One Power: Only available if you have two or more powers of a given source. Your ER works with just one of your powers. -50%.

Slow Recharge: Your ER recharges slowly. -20% for one point/hour; -60% for one point/day.

Special Recharge: Your ER doesn't recharge over time. It only recharges via DR with Absorption, Leech, the Steal Energy spell, etc. This is incompatible with Slow Recharge. -70%, or -80% if the energy bleeds away at the rate of one point/second, forcing you to use it quickly.

Leech

25 points for level 1,
plus 4 points for each additional level

Giant leeches, striges (p. 94), vampires, and many other traditional and B-movie monsters suck the life from their victims. "Psychic vampires" and evil spirits usually dispense with the traditional bite. Beings embodying alien geometries sometimes even have *ranged* life-stealing abilities. Leech is a general case of Vampiric Bite (p. B96) that can be modified to suit all of these horrors and more.

To use Leech, you must maintain *ongoing* contact with your victim; a brief touch isn't enough. In combat, you must grapple or pin him – which is trivial if he's unconscious or otherwise helpless. Out of combat, options include a long handshake, hug, or more intimate embrace.

While you maintain contact, each level of Leech lets you drain 1 HP per second from your victim. You heal 1 HP per *full* 3 HP you steal. You can't raise your HP above normal, but you can continue the drain without healing yourself.

The drain ends instantly if you release your victim, or if he breaks free or dies. If he survives, the stolen HP heal like any other injury.

Leech 1 costs 25 points; successive levels cost 4 points apiece. For example, to drain 10 HP per second requires Leech 10, which costs 25 + 9 × 4 = 61 points. At the GM's option, points of drain convert to dice as described under *Modifying Dice + Adds* (p. B269); e.g., 4 HP become 1d, 7 HP become 2d, and 10 HP become 2d+3.

Leech only affects living beings. It can't steal HP from machines or inanimate objects. However, the GM may allow a variant ability – Leech (Mechanical) – that *only* affects machines. The point cost is identical. With Steal HT, this could represent the ability of "gremlins" to cause machines to fail and break down. Steal FP is off limits for machines.

Special Enhancements

To work at a distance, Leech *requires* Malediction 1 or 2 (+100% or +150%) on top of Ranged (+40%). Roll the Quick Contest of Will for Malediction every second (once per turn, in combat). Each victory lets you drain 1 HP per level. You can only affect one victim at a time. The following enhancements can further tailor Leech to specific monsters:

Accelerated Healing: You heal 1 HP per HP stolen. Your attack doesn't harm your *victim* any faster than usual, but it heals *you* more quickly. +25%.

Addictive Bite: Your drain is addictive for the victim! If you steal more than 1/3 of his HP with an unbroken series of attacks, he gains the Addiction disadvantage until he can break it by withdrawal. +200%, or +400% if your victim *also* acquires Uncontrollable Appetite (12).

Doleovore: You can drain bonus HP from people in pain. From a given subject, you may steal additional HP per second equal to *half* his current pain penalty – that is, an extra 1 HP/second for Moderate Pain, 2 HP/second for Severe Pain, or 3 HP/second for Terrible Pain – or an extra 4 HP/second from someone in Agony; see p. B428. Victims with Low Pain Threshold double your feeding potential; those with High Pain Threshold halve it. +20%.

Hazard: You can combine Steal FP with one of the modifiers under *Hazard* (p. B104) to steal dreams (Missed Sleep), warmth (Freezing), and so on. Treat the stolen FP as if they were lost to that hazard. Any FP or HP you gain can heal *your* losses to the same hazard.

Heals FP: Every 3 HP you drain restores 1 HP *or* 1 FP. You can't raise FP above normal. +60% if you can choose whether to heal HP or FP; +30% if you only heal FP when healed to full HP.

Metuovore: You can take extra HP from frightened people. From a given victim, you may drain additional HP per second equal to his margin of failure on a Fright Check rolled in your presence. To drain more, find another coward or scare your victim again! +20%.

Steal (Other Score): You steal ST, DX, IQ, HT, or FP *instead* of HP. ST theft reduces BL and damage. IQ drain lowers Will and Per. ST and HT losses *don't* lower HP and FP, though. Attribute losses affect skills based on those scores. Drain occurs at the rate of 1 point per level of Leech. It ceases if the victim's score reaches 0. Regardless of what you steal, you heal 1 HP (1 FP, with Heals FP or Only Heals FP) per 3 points drained. Your victim regains lost scores at the rate he recovers FP. Cost depends on what you drain: -25% for FP (or +50%, if you drain HP when your victim has 0 FP), +100% for ST or HT, or +300% for DX or IQ. If you can steal more than one of these, buy Leech several times with different enhancements. To use these simultaneously, add Link.

Steal Youth: You permanently age your victim instead of stealing HP. Each second of draining ages him by months equal to your level. See *Age and Aging* (p. B444) for long-term effects, and note that Unaging subjects are immune. You don't heal, but may grow a month younger per *two* months stolen, if desired. This is incompatible with other special modifiers. +300% if victims regain their youth when you die; +450% if truly permanent.

Special Limitations

Leeches who must touch their victim's *skin* have the Contact Agent limitation (-30%). The traditional vampire has Blood Agent (-40%), and must bite his victim; Sharp Teeth or Sharp Beak (p. B91) is indispensable. These options and the Ranged option discussed above are mutually exclusive. Some additional limitations are specific to Leech:

Obligate Doleovore: You can *only* feed on pain. Your *total* (not bonus) HP drain is equal to half your victim's pain penalty, as described for Doleovore. (You *can* take both modifiers, meaning that you can only feed on those in pain, but get "extra" HP from them.) -50%.

Obligate Metuovore: You can *only* feed on fear. Your *total* (not bonus) HP drain is equal to your victim's margin of failure on a Fright Check, as described for Metuovore. (You *can* take both modifiers, meaning that you can only feed on frightened victims, but get "extra" HP from them.) -50%.

Only Heals FP: You *can't* heal HP. You can only use the HP you drain to restore missing FP, as described for Heals FP. This is incompatible with Heals FP. -20%.

New Limitations

Two new modifiers reflect elements common in horror literature (Corrupting) and folklore (Terminal Condition).

Corrupting

-20%

A trait with this limitation causes Corruption (see *Power Corrupts,* pp. 146-148) each time it's used. The default effect is 1 point of Corruption per point by which Corrupting reduces the cost of the modified trait. The GM may vary this ratio in his campaign.

Even "indirect" uses of the affected trait cause Corruption. The GM should remain alert for these! For instance, if something like Magery, Power Investiture, or Trained by a Master is Corrupting, then using any spell, rite, or skill the advantage enables causes Corruption – a cruel but extremely appropriate way to model black magicians, priests of Nyarlathotep, or students of evil eunuch mandarins.

Corrupting can also be applied to a disadvantage that offers a self-control roll. In that case, it's a +20% *enhancement,* worsening the disadvantage. The default effect is 1 point of Corruption per 5 points of *unmodified* disadvantage value each time the sufferer fails the self-control roll. Use this to model, for example, the "reluctant vampire" who grows more bestial every time he submits to the urge to drink human blood.

Terminal Condition

Variable

Only allowed on abilities that affect others for at least a minute. Your enemies can end your ability's ongoing effects with a simple act: kissing the subject, speaking three words, etc. If this condition isn't met, the effects have their usual duration.

This is worth -5% if the condition is arcane enough to require research; -10% if a skill roll (against Religious Ritual, Ritual Magic, Thaumatology, etc.) can discover it; or -20% if common knowledge. These values become -0% (a special effect), -5%, and -10% if the condition is difficult to arrange even if known, like a kiss *from a princess* or words spoken *by an elf.*

Abilities that *can't* end until a certain condition is met just have Extended Duration, Permanent (+150%). This enhancement already requires such a condition – you can't take Terminal Condition separately.

New Perk

This nasty perk is useful for ghouls, nosferatu, disease demons, and so much more!

Pestilent

You're dirty and foul, with gore-caked claws, pus-oozing sores, etc. Should you injure a living person through an unarmed attack, he must check for infection (p. B444) at -3, just as if he had been wounded in a locale with a special infection.

Disadvantages

Horror characters are traditionally a disadvantaged lot, scarred and diseased mentally and physically. For possible uses of disadvantages as character hooks, see pp. 7-8.

Addiction

see p. B122

A large part of running a horror campaign is adding scary or disturbing supernatural components to elements of normal human existence. Sometimes, though, normal human existence needs little help to become scary and disturbing. Addiction is a prime example of this.

Secret Advantages and Disadvantages

The protagonists of horror adventures are often encountering the supernatural for the first time. They have no idea how it will affect them. One way to simulate this is to assign PCs *secret* advantages (p. B33) and disadvantages (p. B120) – qualities that even their players don't know about. Such secret traits make good tie-ins with character hooks (pp. 6-8).

A useful trick is to balance secret advantages against secret disadvantages, which will have no net effect on the hero's point total. In this case, *don't* count secret disadvantages or quirks toward the campaign's disadvantage limit (if any) or the five-quirk maximum. The GM need not give all PCs secret traits worth the same number of points – or even give all PCs secret traits! This helps preserve the uncertainty.

Secret advantages and disadvantages should be chosen from qualities that the subject wouldn't have discovered previously. A person could easily possess Magery, Magic Resistance, psionics, or another supernatural power – or more prosaically, Animal Empathy – without ever realizing it. Previously unknown disadvantages might include certain Phobias, a "missing time" Delusion, or even Split Personality. Someone could be a Weirdness Magnet all his life and never figure it out. And anyone might have an old family Patron or Enemy (such as a vampire, or even an entire supernatural conspiracy like the Cabal).

When a secret trait comes into play, *don't* explain exactly what's happening, and make any necessary rolls (such as resistance rolls) in secret. Simply give a vague hint: "The green fire just washes over you . . . it tickles, though." There are some advantages that a person might *never* know about, such as Immunity to Disease – if he thinks about it at all, he thinks he's been lucky.

Psychological horror games and campaigns in which monstrous PCs battle their inner compulsions to retain shards of humanity can both benefit from some prominent addictions on the part of PCs or NPCs.

In some horror settings, certain exposures to the supernatural – the bite of a vampire, the attentions of succubi, etc. – are addictive (for rules, see Addictive Bite under *Leech*, p. 21). Sorcerers might get hooked on the "rush" of black magic. And even if a vampire can *survive* on cow's blood, he may be *addicted* to human blood (or Type AB blood, or virgins' blood . . .). Depending on the specifics, such a habit might be an Uncontrollable Appetite (p. B159) rather than an Addiction. If the junk comes from sentient beings (vampires, demons, succubi, innocents), and your condition features daily cravings and forces self-control rolls, then it's both!

Example: Craving vampire bites is an Addiction; it's likely cheap (if not precisely easy) to satisfy, totally addictive, and not technically illegal: a -10-point Addiction. But it's *also* an Uncontrollable Appetite; it requires the cooperation of a sentient being (a vampire), and it's just so *hard* not to fling down that crucifix and beg for another taste . . . If kept away from vampires for long enough, the addict goes into withdrawal and loses the Addiction, but the Uncontrollable Appetite may last a lifetime.

Code of Honor

see p. B127

The first literary vampire, Lord Ruthven, would hiss "Remember your oath!" at critical points in the story. His successors can surely do no less. Codes of Honor especially suitable for horror campaigns include:

Code of Honor (Cabalistic): The Code of Honor of the Cabal (p. 102). Don't betray the existence of the supernatural; expand the Cabal's knowledge and power; avenge your passer. *-5 points.*

Code of Honor (Oathbound): Many black magicians – and even more spirits, demons, djinn, etc. – follow a strict policy of keeping to the letter of their sworn word. This Code of Honor can be "stacked" with another. *-5 points.*

Code of Honor (Traditional Secret Society): Suitable for conspiracies, witches' covens, and the like. Don't betray the society or reveal its secrets to outsiders; aid fellow members of the society where possible. *-5 points.*

Code of Honor (Vampire Society): Vampires in literature and games often belong to a centuries-old, stultifying aristocracy that follows a Code such as this. Keep vampirism hidden from outsiders; a fellow vampire's sanctum is inviolate; don't sire a new vampire without permission; obey and respect the elders in all things; you're responsible for your get; follow court etiquette or be shamed; take no steps outside the Society. *-15 points.*

Compulsive Behavior

see p. B128

Many monsters suffer from (or symbolize) compulsions. The following is especially appropriate for horror:

Compulsive Murderer: When you spot a suitable victim – someone you're sexually attracted to, someone whose death won't be noticed, someone the voices tell you to kill, nubile teens frolicking at your deserted summer camp, etc. – you have an overwhelming urge to kill them. Not necessarily immediately; this isn't Berserk, but the smoldering urge of a serial killer. But once you've failed that self-control roll and identified your next victim, you begin to plan the murder as carefully as you know how. If you seem to be drawing out the planning process too long, the GM may saddle you with Bad Temper, Chronic Pain (migraine), or another sign of your increasing frustration until you make your kill. *-15 points.**

Ghostly Repetition

Ghosts are often bound to repeat specific actions whenever they appear: walk along the old balcony, hang themselves, open and close the cellar door, rattle chains in the attic, etc. These are supernatural restrictions, not mere bad habits; there's *no* self-control roll to avoid them. If the ghost can't carry out his compulsion, then he suffers from Unluckiness (p. B160) until the omission is remedied. Disadvantage value depends solely on the extent to which the ghost's actions are limited compared to the living:

-1 point: A trivial motivation, or an activity that uses no appreciable amount of time, or a restriction that almost never crops up (6 or less on 3d during the average game session). *Example:* Ring any church bell you see on Sunday.

-5 points: One of many motivations, or something that uses up less than half his time, or a restriction that rarely crops up (9 or less). *Example:* Ring the main tower bell of St. Magnus' once every night.

-10 points: His primary motivation, or an activity that uses up at least half his time, or something that comes up regularly (12 or less). *Example:* Ring the main tower bell of St. Magnus' all night.

-15 points: His only motivation, or behavior that takes up all his time, or a restriction that comes up nigh-continuously (15 or less). *Example:* Ring the main tower bell of St. Magnus' constantly, never leaving the bell tower.

Use the same rules and point costs for a ghostly Obsession (p. B146) that allows no self-control roll.

Delusions

see p. B130

Two Delusions – both likely bought and roleplayed as Major (-10 points) – are particularly appropriate (and amusing) in a horror campaign:

- "The supernatural is so much hogwash. There's no such thing as a ghost (monster, demon, whatever), so I have nothing to fear in this graveyard (decrepit old house, dank and foul-smelling cavern, wherever)." The people likely to notice this and react at -2 are believers in the supernatural – especially its recent victims.
- "The supernatural is everywhere. There are ghosts in my attic, gremlins in my car, zombies in my closet, and vampires in my cellar." Your -2 to reactions is from normal folks, law-enforcement and medical personnel in particular.

As Mulder and Scully proved for nine seasons, a party with both Delusions represented is in for some grand roleplaying.

False Memories

This kind of Delusion is common in psychological and conspiratorial horror. False memories usually result from alien abduction, brainwashing, telepathic manipulation, or good, old-fashioned "hysterical amnesia" in which the mind crafts its own "screen memory" to block out something too horrible to recall. A PC may begin the game with False Memories, which the GM might wish to handle similarly to Amnesia (p. B123). Point value depends on the importance of the real memory the false one covers up. Unlike other Delusions, False Memories *don't* include a reaction penalty – nobody knows you're delusional, and they might not believe it if they did!

Trivial Memory: The memory of a single, relatively minor incident; e.g., you missed a test, your third-grade teacher's name was Ms. Weishaupt, or you owned a tin model of the Roswell saucer as a kid in 1937. Recalling the truth may make some things snap into place, or confuse the issue further, but it won't involve a major trauma. *-1 point.*

Meaningful Memory: The kind of memory that could affect your life; e.g., you fell asleep once on guard duty, you own a different car from the one on your title papers, or you had a brief affair with a necromancer. Recalling the truth will likely affect your behavior (drink more coffee on guard duty, check your car for other changes, stay out of bars near cemeteries), but it won't keep you from functioning normally or derail your "normal life." *-5 points.*

Significant Memory: Memories like these deal with major events or people in your life; e.g., you were abducted by UFOs, you had a best friend who served with you in 'Nam, there was no Gulf War, or your job or college career was vastly different from your recollection. Recalling the truth will change your life if you let it, but won't shatter it completely. *-10 points.*

Crucial Memory: These memories go to the core of your being; e.g., you're actually a robot, you have another personality who's a serial killer (or a werewolf), your wife isn't who you married, or you sold your first-born son to Moloch. Recalling the truth will radically rescript your existence in almost all respects. *-15 points.*

Once you discover a false memory, the GM will replace your Delusion with disadvantages worth as many points as the Delusion (Guilt Complex, Obsession, and Sense of Duty seem like good starts).

Untrue Beliefs

To paraphrase Mark Twain, it isn't what you don't know about vampires that will kill you; it's what you know about vampires that *just ain't so* that will kill you. Charlatans, wannabes, incompetent or lazy writers, and foolish debunkers all do their part to make sure that the field of the occult is full of misinformation – which is to say, full of potential Delusions. The GM may have to adjudicate specific situations: "My violet energy will let me heal werewolves" *might* cause negative reactions among people who don't believe in werewolves, or among those who don't believe in violet energy, but it isn't likely to come up in conversation. And in a world where both may exist, or in a "clued-in" society of the supernaturally aware, such a Delusion won't necessarily trigger an automatic reaction penalty. Such Delusions have other effects instead.

On your turn in combat, during a magical ritual, and at any other time when such a Delusion would apply (GM's decision), you must attempt a self-control roll (p. B121) against a value of 12. The GM may permit other self-control numbers for Untrue Beliefs, with the usual effect on point value.

Success lets you act normally. Failure means you must do something risky – much as if you were suffering from On the Edge (p. B146). In combat, you might All-Out Attack, try an elaborate move that reduces effective skill to 3 (making any roll of 13+ a critical failure), or turn your side or back to an enemy you believe to be no threat.

On a critical failure, you must take some action that will affect the rest of the encounter; e.g., discard your weapon in favor of an ineffective talisman, set fire to something important or explosive, ingest an irritating (p. B428) substance for its "magical benefit," or cut yourself for at least 1 HP of injury to "make contact with the battle spirits."

The point value of an Untrue Belief depends on its nature:

Minor: Affects combat against a rare category of foes, applies just once per occasion, or only comes up under uncommon circumstances. *Examples:* "Malaysian vampires have a secret body hidden nearby that we have to kill." "To balance our chakras, we should all drink a quart of holy water before the ritual." "These high-tension lines overhead will protect us!" *-5 points.*

Major: Affects combat against a large category of foes, applies repeatedly during a ritual, or concerns situations that might arise in almost any encounter. *Examples:* "Werewolves are vulnerable to tungsten." "I have to keep a blood bond going to do magic." "If she harms me, the Wiccan Rede means she takes three times that in damage herself." *-10 points.*

Severe: Affects almost all supernatural encounters, all of the time. *Examples:* "I know the True Name of Merlin, which all base things fear." "No evil can affect one who is pure in heart." "Don't worry, my Atlantean spirit guide will tell us what to do!" *-15 points.*

Dread

see p. B132

Some vampires, lycanthropes, and other monsters suffer the effects of their Dread only when they can perceive the threat. If it's hidden, it has no effect. (In the classic example, Peter Cushing whips out a crucifix from behind his tweedy lapel, causing the vampire to recoil in anguish.) Use the limitation below to model such metaphysics.

New Special Limitation

Insensitive: Your Dread kicks in only when you physically sense the hated object or substance. A threat hidden from your conventional senses (e.g., under clothing or inside a chest) triggers no response. -50%.

Phobia

see p. B148

Here are some more, suitably horrific, things to be afraid of:

Apocalypse (Millenniphobia): Fear of the "end times" might involve religious mania, or desperate panic about global warming, nuclear war, or some other massive impending crisis. Make self-control rolls whenever symptoms of the apocalypse appear, and to resist taking dramatic action to forestall said crisis. This is an excellent Phobia for cosmic horror campaigns – or in *any* horror setting where the PCs have glimpsed utter doom. *-5 points.**

Being Buried Alive (Taphephobia): A common fear in Victorian times and earlier, and still common today in places with less-than-rigorous embalming and funerary practices. Taphephobes won't willingly go underground, and must make a self-control roll even to enter a basement! *-10 points.**

Ghosts (Spectrophobia): This fear kicks in not only during actual encounters with the spectral undead, but also in "haunted houses" (genuine or not), cemeteries, and similar environments. *-15 points if ghosts are common, -10 if they're known but uncommon, -5 if they're generally considered "imaginary."**

Government (Cratiphobia): You fear not only the taxmen and spies that most people distrust, but also the ordinary military, police, and courts. Moreover, you believe in – and fear – black helicopters, Men In Black, etc. Cratiphobes can still be extremely patriotic, by their lights, revering the flag and those government figures sufficiently remote to seem innocuous or virtuous ("The holy Czar is imprisoned by the nobles!" "Jefferson's vision has been betrayed!"). *-15 points in CR4+ societies, -10 in CR2-3 societies, -5 in CR0-1 societies.**

Hunger (Limouphobia): Specifically, fear of starving to death. Make a self-control roll whenever it looks like the food might run out, at -1 per FP lost due to missed meals (p. B426). *-10 points.**

Infinity (Apeirophobia): An eminently suitable terror for a cosmic horror campaign! In practice, it might resemble a weirdly selective form of agoraphobia. Apeirophobes flee from the implications of modern cosmology, astrophysics, and even planetary geology; the GM may require a self-control roll or simply apply twice the penalty on p. B149 to attempts to use related skills. *-5 points.**

Madness (Dementophobia): A dementophobe doesn't merely fear obviously crazy people but constantly obsesses about any signs of approaching insanity in *himself*. Prior to the 1920s, many people believed in congenital or inherited insanity; evidence of insane ancestors triggers a self-control roll (at -4 in milieus where inherited insanity is scientifically or culturally accepted). Some dementophobes routinely test themselves for incipient mania; others deny, loudly and often, any sign of personal mental instability. *-10 points.**

Mutilation (Traumatophobia): Any mutilated person or object triggers a self-control roll for a traumatophobe. Roll at -4 if the person is someone you know; *being* mutilated means a roll at -6, and can eventually bring on additional disadvantages, from Callous to Delusions ("I'm just fine" or "The doctors did this to me"). Also make a self-control roll in any situation involving heavy machinery, potentially maiming combat, etc. *-10 points.**

Poisoning (Toxicophobia): One of the most common fears in Western culture! Reactions range from obsessive concern about food or drink to manic efforts to filter, purify, and secure anything ingested. In some campaigns, vampires or witches may trigger self-control rolls for toxicophobes; see *Poisoning Phobias* (p. 59). *-10 points.**

Rats (Murophobia): A vampire who commands rats will likely notice any phobic reaction and send his swarms to torment his victim. Vampires are very, very cruel that way. *-5 points.**

Sex (Coitophobia): Some vampires will trigger coitophobic attacks, as will succubi. Coitophobes also react badly in overly sexualized contexts such as dance clubs, strip joints, and music video channels. However, they're immune to conventional seduction attempts. *-10 points.**

You *can* claim points for a fear of something that doesn't exist! Your imagination will ensure that things reminiscent of what you fear regularly provoke phobic reactions. For instance, spectrophobes in a setting without real ghosts still make self-control rolls for sudden gusts of wind, "cold spots" in the house, or dimly seen reflections in windows.

Social Stigma

see p. B155

Being dead is a Social Stigma, and there's no shortage of things in a horror campaign that might have this problem, from vampires to victims of overwhelming conspiracies:

Dead: Either you're visibly not living (pallid, rotting, mummified, etc.) or your death was common knowledge (e.g., you're a dead celebrity). You have no claim to property; your heirs can take possession of your worldly goods. You can likely be murdered (or re-murdered) with no legal penalty! When dealing with the living, you suffer -4 to reactions and social skills – and those encountering you unexpectedly must make Fright Checks. *-20 points.*

Disadvantages from Fright Checks

One of the biggest creative challenges for the GM is determining what sort of psychological burden to place on a hero when a failed Fright Check results in a new disadvantage or quirk. Don't hesitate to listen to recommendations from the players. The most diabolical suggestions will come from the ones not playing the victim – players delight in thinking up gruesome fates, provided that these won't befall *their* character!

Make sure that the new trait is somehow connected to the frightening event – but remember that the human mind is capable of some extremely convoluted reasoning to avoid unpleasant realizations.

Example: Lt. Harry Collier is in a downtown alley at 11:00 p.m. to meet an informant. He hears muffled screams around the corner, and runs to investigate. He arrives just in time to see a 12'-tall, tentacled abomination drag a decapitated wino down an open manhole. Failing his Fright Check badly, Collier acquires a mild Phobia or other disadvantage. Collier's player decides to treat it this way: The monster preys on street people, who have no money; the way to stay away from the monster is to keep as much money as possible. Thus, Collier adds the Miserliness disadvantage.

The next night, Lt. Collier is poking around that same alley for clues (we never specified his IQ, but it must not be very high . . .) when he discovers the half-eaten body of another unfortunate transient, stuffed in a Dumpster. This calls for another Fright Check, and Collier fails again. This time, because the smell of rotting garbage was so strong at the time of the shock, he forms a subconscious association between the two. This doesn't translate directly into fear of garbage – that would be too easy! Another player suggests saddling Collier with the Odious Personal Habit that everything he comes into daily contact with be spotlessly clean and, if possible, disinfected. Collier becomes the only detective on the force to take three showers a day.

Supernatural Features

see p. B157

Monsters reveal themselves many ways besides the old "shriek and leap." Additional Supernatural Features appropriate to horror denizens include:

Cannot Close Eyes: You cannot close your eyes; perhaps you lack eyelids. You can conceal this with sunglasses or veils. It causes no ill effects (like dry eyes, sleeplessness, or increased vulnerability to blinding attacks) unless you purchase those separately. -1 on reaction rolls made by those who watch your eyes for more than a minute; +1 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-5 points.*

Cold Spot: Your presence or passage chills the air around you. While most common among ghosts, this trait might also suit methane-blooded aliens, frost demons, or even vampires – Romanian urban legend claimed that their dictatorial family, the Ceauşescus, never needed air conditioning. -1 on reaction rolls made by those you stand near, brush past, etc; +1 on all rolls made to deduce your secret, or to spot you if invisible. *-5 points.*

Long Tongue: You have a very long tongue, likely unpleasant- or monstrous-looking. Wendigo merely have extraordinarily long tongues; serpent-folk might have forked tongues. -1 on reaction rolls made by those who carefully watch you eating, look into or kiss your open mouth, etc.; +1 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-5 points.*

Malformed Feet: Your feet are freakish or inhuman. In Near Eastern legend, demons and ghouls often have the feet of asses or fowl. In most societies, you can conceal this trait with shoes, boots, or a long gown; in habitually barefoot ones (e.g., Polynesia or Kalahari Bushmen), treat this as Unnatural Features (p. B22) instead. -2 on reaction rolls made by anyone who sees your feet; +2 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-10 points.*

No Pulse: You have no detectable pulse or heartbeat – whether because you no longer circulate blood (most undead), your circulatory system is wildly different from the norm (aliens), or you're a construct (robots, golems, fetches, etc.). -1 on reaction rolls made by those who notice; +1 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-5 points.*

Rugose Skin: Your skin feels or appears rough, pitted, or artificial when touched or examined closely – a common feature of legendary MIBs, androids, pod creatures, and other disguised monsters. -2 on reaction rolls made by those who touch your skin or see it in good light; +2 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-10 points.*

Witch's Mark: According to medieval lore, when the Devil initiates a witch into a coven, he leaves the mark of his finger, mouth, or talon. Resembling a wart, a mole, or a patch of dead skin, this reveals the witch to those with the proper training: Expert Skill (Demonology), Hidden Lore (Witchcraft), Law (Witch-Finding), Occultism, or other relevant skill. -2 on reaction rolls made by those who discover it; +2 on all rolls made to deduce your secret. *-5 points (ease of concealment halves the usual value).*

New Disadvantage

This new way to feel fear can afflict one-shot characters or be a consequence of long-term monster hunting.

Panic Attacks

Variable

You suffer from panic attacks, most likely as a result of a serious anxiety disorder. During an attack, you may be sweaty, nauseous, numb, dizzy, or choking; you likely suffer from chest constriction or pain, tunnel vision, or shortness of breath. In all cases, you feel sudden, intense fear.

The GM will roll 3d whenever you're in a stressful situation. On a 6 or less, you have a panic attack. A roll is always required when you are hyperventilating (e.g., after intense physical exercise, definitely including combat), are exposed to the object of a Phobia, or fail a Fright Check or make it exactly. Withdrawal from Alcoholism or other Addictions also counts as a stressful situation, as does a heart attack or a period of starvation. In all cases, if an attack occurs, it's *in addition to* any other results!

Point value depends on the attack's severity:

Mild: Duration is 2d seconds. You have -2 to all attribute and skill rolls, and -4 to active defenses. *-5 points.*

Severe: Duration is 1d minutes. You have -3 to all attribute and skill rolls, and -5 to active defenses. You can't move from the spot unless you flee at full Move from it! At the beginning of the attack, you lose 2 FP. *-10 points.*

Crippling: Duration is 3d minutes. You have -4 to all attribute and skill rolls, and -6 to active defenses. You can't move from the spot, although you may cower (crouch). At the beginning of the attack, you lose 3 FP. At the end, the GM will immediately roll again to see if it triggers *another* attack! *-25 points.*

New Meta-Traits

In addition to the meta-traits on pp. B262-263, some new trait combinations come in handy when creating horrific races or characters. To save space, list these on character sheets as you would advantages.

Corporeal Undead Meta-Traits

Corporeal undead are the material remains of the dead reanimated by some means, usually supernatural. Most have either Unhealing (Partial) or Unhealing (Total); choose one for the racial template. Enhanced ST and HP are common racial traits as well. Many corporeal undead also have Disturbing Voice or Mute. The meta-trait to use depends on the body's condition:

Intact Undead: This recently dead body hasn't decayed significantly. Doesn't Breathe [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; Supernatural Features (No Body Heat, No Pulse, Pallor) [-20]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; and Unaging [15]. *Features:* Sterile. Some intact corpses have the feature "Will become a rotting corpse"; others are mystically preserved. *90 points.*

Mummified Undead: Whether by artificial preservation or exposure to a dry natural environment, this body dried out instead of rotting. Its desiccated tissues catch fire easily – the major vulnerability of mummified undead. Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Fragile (Combustible) [-5]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Vitals, Unliving) [35]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; and Unaging [15]. *Features:* Sterile. *80 points.*

Rotting Undead: This corpse had time to decay before revival – or perhaps it decayed *after* revival. Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Bad Smell [-10]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Sexless [-1]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; and Unaging [15]. *Features:* Will become a skeleton. *59 points.*

Skeletal Undead: The dead person's flesh has mostly or entirely rotted away; only the bones and teeth remain, held together by scraps of dried tendons or unseen magic. He's light and fast-moving, but somewhat breakable. Basic Speed+1 [20]; Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Cannot Float [-1]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; DR 2 [10]; Fragile (Brittle) [-15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Eyes, No Vitals, Unliving) [40]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Sexless [-1]; Skinny [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Vacuum Support [5]; and Vulnerability (Crushing ×2) [-30]. *Features:* Skull has only DR 2 total. *68 points.*

Spirit Meta-Traits

The Spirit and Astral Entity meta-traits (p. B263) are but two of *many* possibilities for spirits:

Haunt: A spirit that can neither materialize nor become visible, but that can affect the material world. Start with Astral Entity, but Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40] becomes Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%) [120], for 80 points. *251 points.*

Outsider: A spirit that doesn't belong in this reality, like most demons in fiction. It can only affect this reality when summoned here, and it can only maintain itself under specialized conditions or with great effort (1 FP/second to materialize *or* become visible; 2 FP/second for both!). Start with Astral Entity, but Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40] becomes Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial (Only if Summoned, -40%), +60%; Always On, -50%; Always On becomes Usually On (Only if Summoned, -40%), +6%) [93], for 53 points, and Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36] becomes Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Usually On (Only if Summoned, -40%), +3%) [38], for 2 points. *226 points.*

Specter: A specter (from the Latin *specere,* "to look") can become visible effortlessly. It materializes with some difficulty (1 FP/minute), but more easily than normal spirits. Start with Spirit, but Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Usually On, -40%) [128] becomes Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Difficult Materialization, -20%) [144], for 16 points, and Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Usually On, +5%) [38] becomes Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Switchable, +10%) [40], for 2 points. *279 points.*

Threshold Entity: Like most demons in folklore, a threshold entity is either invisible and immaterial, or visible and material. It has no trouble switching between these states. Start with Astral Entity, but Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40] becomes Insubstantiality (Link, +10%) [88], for 48 points, and Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36] becomes Invisibility (Link, +10%; Substantial Only, -10%; Switchable, +10%) [44], for 8 points. *227 points.*

A werewolf can only be killed by a silver bullet, or a silver knife . . . or a stick with a silver handle.
– Maleva the Gypsy, in ***The Wolf Man*** *(1941)*

Skills

A few skills require additional elaboration in a ***Horror*** game.

Area Knowledge†

see p. B176

In some horror campaigns, investigators may have experience of, reliable information on, or regular news from other realities: Hell, the astral plane, Dread Carcosa, etc. Area Knowledge for such a realm usually resembles that for a large nation; seers and savants know its boundaries and principal entry or nexus points, its conditions and customs, and the names of its major rulers and powerful entities. As with mundane Area Knowledge, such information might overlap with other skills; e.g., if the politics of Hell play a significant role in the campaign, then the GM may introduce Current Affairs (Infernal) rather than make Area Knowledge (Hell) do double duty.

Extradimensional Area Knowledge defaults to Occultism-3 instead of to Geography (Regional)-3. Only individuals who've *visited* the realm in question have an IQ-4 default!

Armoury/TL†

see p. B178

In worlds with plenty of supernatural menaces (like most horror settings), mortals will work out methods of killing them. The GM may permit a new Armoury specialty in such a campaign:

Esoteric: This covers general expertise with holy weapons, silversmithing, wooden stakes, teargas canisters reloaded with incense, and so forth, even when a given weapon would fall under another specialty. The GM should still enforce familiarity penalties (p. B169) for specific esoteric weapons; e.g., -2 to hand-load jacketed silver slugs if the armorer is used to loading shotgun shells with hawthorn shavings. Needless to say, this a wildly cinematic ability, possessed by the Frog Brothers in *Lost Boys,* Whistler in *Blade,* and similar action-horror weaponsmiths.

Current Affairs/TL†

see p. B186

In many horror settings, there are enough people on the fringes of the mundane world to constitute a community of their own: vampires and vampire-hunters, monsters and mad scientists, etc. Such campaigns may feature a new Current Affairs specialty:

Supernatural: Knowledge of what's going on in the shadow realm behind the scenes. This encompasses aspects of other specialties: the occult artifacts trade, which starlet is vampire-hooked, whether the old Whateley place has been burned down yet, who's a rising star in the Cabal, etc. It may go by another name in a specific setting (e.g., Occult Underground, Winterland, or The Scene).

Electronics Operation/TL†

see p. B189

In technologically oriented campaigns with extensive or likely supernatural contact, a new specialty may prove useful:

Parapsychology: Technology such as ghost sensors, necrophones, near-death projectors, EVP recorders, and ionized spirit wards. At the GM's discretion, this specialty might also cover equipment optimized for supernatural phenomena other than ghosts; e.g., demons or malevolent shadows. In backgrounds where ghosts are psychic phenomena, the Parapsychology and Psychotronics specialties may be identical. Operating most Kirlian devices requires Photography (Spirit).

In campaigns that use this specialty, it also applies to Electronics Repair/TL and Engineer/TL (both p. B190).

Expert Skill†

see p. B193

Some horror campaigns can get by with a broad use of Occultism, while others work best with specialized Expert Skills. If an Expert Skill covers broad "public knowledge" – especially human beliefs – but *not* secrets, then Hidden Lore may exist alongside it and only be available to the beings these skills cover (and to their confidantes). If Expert Skills are themselves arcane, though, then they should *include* any associated Hidden Lore; e.g., Expert Skill (Demonology) would incorporate Hidden Lore (Demon Lore).

Especially appropriate Expert Skills for horror include:

Cryptozoology: The study of *cryptids:* natural creatures denied by science. Can function as Biology, Geography, Naturalist, or Paleontology for this purpose.

Demonology: The study of demons and Hell. Can function as Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Literature, Occultism, or Theology – and *possibly* as Hidden Lore (Demon Lore) – for this purpose. Can also be used as Thaumatology to determine if a given spell is demonic in origin or nature. *Can't* substitute for Exorcism.

Pneumatology: The study of spirits and ghosts. Can function as Anthropology, History, Literature, or Occultism – and *possibly* as Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore) – for this purpose. Depending on the nature of spirits in the setting, it may also overlap Biology, Physics, Psychology, or Theology. *Can't* substitute for Exorcism.

Ufology: The study of UFOs, their witnesses and contactees, and their inhabitants (if any). Can function as Geography, History, Occultism, Physics, or Psychology for this purpose. The Men In Black who deal with the aliens have Expert Skill (Xenology); this is the skill for the frustrated investigators whom the Men In Black thwart.

Vampirology: The study of vampires. Can function as Diagnosis, Forensics, History, Literature, Occultism, Physiology, or Psychology – and *possibly* as Hidden Lore (Vampire Lore) – for this purpose.

Hazardous Materials/TL†

see p. B199

If vampire blood can be stored and transported like any other infectious blood sample, then doing so falls under Hazardous Materials (Biological). But the alien bolides and strange ichors left behind by Things Man Was Not Meant To Know may corrode space-time itself without proper handling! If the authorities have developed suitable protocols for dealing with horrific materials (or immaterials – storing or transporting ghosts might be necessary), then one or more further specialties – Cosmic, Ectoplasmic, Paraphysical, Supernatural, etc. – may be available, although such training might require an Unusual Background.

Occultism

see p. B212

This skill is central to horror campaigns in which bold investigators match wits with the supernatural and the uncanny – that is, the occult. Its most common use is to determine the heroes' knowledge of legends and folklore pertaining to the phenomena they're investigating. The GM may apply penalties as severe as -5 for obscure legends or ones that deviate subtly from standard beliefs ("According to the *Tome of Alphosuchus,* this rakshasa fears only the smell of laburnum."), and bonuses of up to +5 for common knowledge ("Vampires don't like sunlight."). The latter can come from pop culture, or be because everybody *knows* vampires are real!

Depending on the campaign feel, Occultism might default to certain Hobby Skills (p. B200) at from -2 (for a close match, like horror movies) to -4 (for a looser fit, like SF), especially for famous monsters such as vampires and zombies. Of course, this information could be erroneous if the writers took artistic license, or didn't know that Hmong vampires prey on the dead, not the living . . .

Photography/TL†

see p. B213

In technologically oriented horror campaigns, investigators with the Photography skill must specialize in either mundane or spirit photography. Photography (Spirit) covers photographing spirits, paranormal energies, and similar supernatural phenomena. Depending on the campaign, it might also encompass alchemical fixers and developers, lenses ground to kabbalistic proportions, special light frequencies, etc., in which case the GM may require something like Alchemy, Electronics Operation (Parapsychology), or Occultism as a prerequisite.

Examining a spirit photograph can provide the same information that Detect (All supernatural phenomena or beings) (p. B48) or the Aura spell (p. B249) grants – although the GM may require a successful roll against Occultism or a similar skill to interpret the data.

Physician/TL†

see p. B213

In campaigns focusing on madness or set in insane asylums, doctors must specialize in either general or psychiatric medicine. Physician (Psychiatric) covers biomedical treatment of mental health problems, including shock therapy, drugs, and whatever else is appropriate in the setting.

Physician (General) and Physician (Psychiatric) default to each other at -4. Physician (Psychiatric) defaults to Psychology (Clinical) at -5.

Psychology†

see p. B216

The GM may opt to add a third specialty, Psychology (Clinical), for psychotherapists, counselors, and other mental health professionals. In addition to predicting the behavior of the mentally ill, this skill covers the diagnosis and understanding of mental illness. In cinematic campaigns, it may also allow treatment! Even in realistic games, it might help treat mental health conditions that don't require institutionalization: minor depression, loss of affect, etc. This specialty covers the "talking cure," interviews, and prognosis; for drugs and other biomedical treatments, use Physician (Psychiatric).

Psychology (Applied or Experimental) and Psychology (Clinical) default to each other at -5. Psychology (Clinical) defaults to Physician (Psychiatric) at -5.

New Wildcard Skill: The Occult! (IQ)

As embodied by Rupert Giles, Ray Stantz, Harry Dresden, and Dr. Occult, this optional wildcard skill (p. B175) replaces Occultism, all specialties of Fortune-Telling and Hidden Lore, and all of the Expert Skills on pp. 28-29. It also covers the occult, supernatural, or weird aspects of Anthropology, Archaeology, Area Knowledge, Criminology, Current Affairs, History, Literature, Psychology, and Research. In some campaigns, it may *further* encompass Alchemy, Dreaming, Exorcism, Herb Lore, Ritual Magic, Symbol Drawing, Thaumatology, and/or Weird Science, along with the creepier sort of Religious Ritual.

New Techniques

Vampire hunters rightly value two basic weapon techniques: the beheading blow and the stake to the heart. In fairness, two monstrous combat techniques also appear here. All four are examples of what ***GURPS Martial Arts*** calls Targeted Attacks – but with cooler names! The fifth technique below, while nonviolent, is perhaps the most powerful.

Beheading Blow

Hard

Default: prerequisite skill-5.
Prerequisite: Any Melee Weapon skill capable of swung cutting attacks; cannot exceed prerequisite skill-2.

This technique lets slayers buy off the -5 to hit the neck when swinging an edged weapon. It's valuable against vampires, liches, and other foes susceptible primarily (or only) to beheading.

> *Oh, that would be tragic. Taking the fun out of slaying, stabbing, beheading.*
>
> *– Buffy Summers, in* ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer,*** *"Bad Girls"*

Neck Bite

Hard

Default: Brawling-5.
Prerequisites: Sharp Teeth or Fangs *and* Brawling; cannot exceed Brawling-2.

This is a common technique for vampires who find themselves in repeated combat or consider themselves to be great hunters. Werewolves use it just for fun (and some like to follow it up with Neck Snap, p. B232).

Stake to the Heart

Hard

Default: prerequisite skill-5.
Prerequisite: Any Melee Weapon skill capable of thrusting impaling attacks; cannot exceed prerequisite skill-2.

This technique is most often used with wooden stakes of varying lengths, including improvised stakes such as chair legs and pool cues. It lets slayers buy off the penalty to thrust for the heart with an impaling weapon. It defaults at -5, and not at -3 as for a shot to the vitals, because the target zone is smaller – hitting the lungs, kidneys, etc. has no effect on the undead!

Strangle Hold

Hard

Default: prerequisite skill-3.
Prerequisite: Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Mummies, disembodied hands (spectral and corporeal), and even a few rippers enjoy this technique. It lets would-be throttlers buy off the penalty to grapple the neck in order to set up a strangle (p. B370).

True Tarot

Hard

Default: IQ-8.
Prerequisites: Precognition *and* Fortune-Telling (Tarot); cannot exceed Fortune-Telling (Tarot).

Many precogs subconsciously rely on fortune-telling impedimenta (e.g., crystal balls, yarrow sticks, or tarot cards) or methods (such as palm-reading or augury) to focus their gift. By dint of long training and psychic tuning to such "crutches," the diviner can increase his odds with deliberate attempts to use Precognition (p. B77).

Other Fortune-Telling specialties have their own versions of this technique: True Augury, True I Ching, True Scrying, etc.

Powers

Powers are gifts like psionics (pp. B254-257) . . . and much more. Each power begins with a description and possible manifestations in a horror campaign. Next is its *Talent,* followed by a list of likely *abilities* – a power's Talent being an advantage that gives a bonus to use its abilities (which are also advantages), much as a standard Talent (p. B89) improves a set of skills. The final element is a selection of *power modifiers* that suit the power in horror, which might include:

Biological: The power is a physical capacity of the user's body, like an electric eel's field. Each use of an active ability costs 1 FP extra. Specially targeted drugs, pathogens, mutations, etc. can block or weaken the power. -10%.

Chi: The possessor channels his life force – or taps global force flows – to energize the power. It requires daily meditation and mudras to maintain; the user must take and live up to Disciplines of Faith or a Vow worth -10 points. -10%.

Cosmic: The power emanates from the fundamental forces of the universe, and cannot be cut off or neutralized. This is characteristic of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. +50%.

Divine: The power is the gift of a god or gods. While it cannot be cut off, the user must keep divine favor. This demands dedication in the form of a -10-point disadvantage such as Disciplines of Faith, Vow, Honesty (12), Berserk (12), Intolerance, or (for evil gods) Bloodlust (12). -10%.

Magical: The power is magical, dependent on mana and mitigated by Mana Damper, Magic Resistance, etc. This modifier is identical to Mana Sensitive (p. B34). -10%.

Moral: The power flows from the fundamental values of the universe. It transcends mere divinity, or (in the case of a monotheistic or Manichean cosmos) embodies only its starkest manifestations. It can only be blocked by such values' opposites: Good vs. Evil, Law vs. Chaos, etc. It requires total dedication in the form of a -15-point disadvantage: Fanaticism, Sadism (12), Honesty (9), etc. -20%.

Nature: Nature herself emits the power, based on the life force present even in the deserts of Mongolia or Antarctica. It weakens as Nature does; rolls for its abilities suffer a penalty from -1 in a clear-cut forest to -10 in a toxic waste dump. It also weakens if the wielder uses (or worse, *depends on*) technology: carrying a TL5 pistol gives -3, while having a TL8 pacemaker implanted imposes -8! -20%.

Psionic: The power is psionic, like those on pp. B255-257, and subject to the same rules. -10%.

Spirit: The power depends on the fickle mood of spirits; the user must get a "Neutral" or better result on an unmodified reaction roll to invoke it. The spirits also demand outward signs of favor: a -5-point disadvantage such as Disciplines of Faith, Trademark (a sigil), or Sense of Duty (Summoned Spirits). -25%, or -5% in the unlikely situation (for horror, anyhow) that the spirits aren't capricious.

Super: The power comes from doubletalk – mad science, strange meteors, etc. Anti-powers and special technologies can block it. -10%.

Sadly, most of these powers will be used by monsters *against* the heroes – although a few might be available to PCs in "supernatural supers" settings or campaigns wherein the players roleplay monsters. See ***GURPS Powers*** for other suitable powers, notably Chaos, Cold/Ice, Darkness, Death, Evil, and Vampirism.

Disease

This is the power to create and spread disease. It's most common among plague demons (Divine), nosferatu (Biological or Magical), and malevolent witches or shamans (Magical or Spirit), but might also emanate from an extradimensional artifact or being (Cosmic), an experimental mutagen (Biological), or worshippers of gods of disease (Divine).

Disease Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Disease ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Disease Abilities: Allies (vermin), with Minion and Summonable; Channeling, with Specialized, Disease Spirits (-50%); Detect, for disease; Invisibility; Microscopic Vision; Resistant, to disease; and Unkillable, perhaps with a vaccine or generalized symbols of health (garlic, running water, etc.) as an Achilles' Heel.

Offensive abilities include Afflictions with Agony, Attribute Penalty, Choking, Coma, Coughing, Disadvantage (especially physical ones), Hallucinating, Nauseated, Pain (any level), Paralysis, Retching, or Seizure; Corrosion Attacks (leprosy, necrotizing fasciitis), Fatigue Attacks, and Toxic Attacks, all of which should be Cyclic; and Leech, either with Accessibility, Only on sick people (-30%) or Link (+10%) to an Affliction or an Innate Attack. Almost all should have Malediction, but more "realistic" attacks might use Contact Agent or Blood Agent.

Power Modifier: Disease. The advantage belongs to the Disease power. This modifier might be Biological (-10%), Cosmic (+50%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

Dream/Nightmare

This is the power to create, manipulate, and travel within dreams and nightmares. It may provide access to (and power over) a common "Dreamland" or "Dreamtime," to the interior of a single dreamer's psyche, or both. While most common among psychics (Psionic) and witches like the Benandanti (Magical), it might also manifest among Aboriginal shamans (Spirit). A god of dreams may grant this power to his avatars and cultists (Divine), or wield it himself (Cosmic). And the victim of a horrific evil might harness it for his post-mortem revenge (Moral).

Dream/Nightmare Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Dream/Nightmare ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Dream/Nightmare Abilities: Allies (tulpas or dream-forms), with Minion and Summonable; Altered Time Rate; Animal Empathy*; Channeling, with Accessibility, Only while sleeping (-20%); Charisma ("my dream girl"); Clairsentience, with Increased Range; Empathy*; Fearlessness; Insubstantiality; Intuition, with Preparation Required (-60%) if it requires a night of dreams; Jumper (Spirit), with Limited Access, Dreams (varies); Less Sleep; Mind Control*, usually with Conditioning; Mind Probe*; Mind Reading*; Mindlink ("dream lover"); Oracle; and Telesend*. Abilities marked * have Accessibility, Only on sleeping targets (-20%).

Nightmare attacks include Afflictions with Disadvantage (Addiction to dream-delights, Delusions, etc.), Euphoria (for "paralysis by paradise"), or Hallucinating; Binding; and Fatigue Attacks with Missed Sleep. All should have Malediction. Model the knives that come out of your fingers as Claws (Long Talons) with Switchable (+10%). Inside the dream realm, your powers might be Cosmic in nature and effect regardless of their origin.

Power Modifier: Dream/Nightmare. The advantage belongs to the Dream/Nightmare power. This modifier might be Cosmic (+50%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), Psionic (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

Fear

This is the power to create and spread fear. It may come from the Great God Pan (Divine or Nature), the user's horrifyingly non-Euclidean form (Cosmic), or superscience "fear gas" (Biological or Super). As an innate gift, it might spring from sheer personal monstrousness (Chi) or hallucinogenic spores (Biological). Evil telepaths (Psionic), banshees (Magical), and black magicians (Magical or Spirit) also enjoy spreading fear.

Fear Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Fear ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Fear Abilities: Terror, obviously! Also Detect, for fear; Elastic Skin; Fearlessness; and Mimicry, with Accessibility, Scary sounds only (-20%).

Fear attacks are mainly Afflictions with Disadvantage (Combat Paralysis, Cowardice, Fearfulness, Panic Attacks, Paranoia, Phobias, etc.), Hallucinating, or Paralysis. In a cosmic horror campaign, Affliction might have the *Advantage* modifier, granting See Invisible! Binding ("rooted to the ground with fear") also fits. Give offensive Fear abilities Malediction *and* Sense-Based ("I will show you fear in a handful of dust").

Power Modifier: Fear. The advantage belongs to the Fear power. This modifier might be Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), Cosmic (+50%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Nature (-20%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

Hell

This power embodies the might and horror of Hell itself. It's commonly associated with devils (Divine), black magicians (Magical), and Satanists (Spirit). Damned entities (Divine) might unleash Hell on Earth, while some infernal shades may be evil incarnate (Moral).

Hellish Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Hellish ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Hellish Abilities: Allies (demons), with Summonable; Blessed (if you can call it that); Channeling, with Specialized, Demons and Devils (-50%); Dark Vision; Detect, for infernal power, Satanists, demons, etc.; Dominance (by purchasing souls); Empathy, with Accessibility, Only human weaknesses (-30%); Medium, with Specialized, Souls in Hell (-50%); and Possession.

Attacks can be anything *bad:* Afflictions (all kinds); Binding, possibly with Area Effect and Persistent (chains or meat hooks); Claws (all sorts); Innate Attacks (any variety, but especially burning, corrosion, or cutting); and Sharp Teeth or Fangs. Build Hellish attacks with Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based.

Power Modifier: Hell. The advantage belongs to the power of Hell. This modifier might be Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), or Spirit (-25%).

Madness

This is the power to create and spread insanity. It's the signature trait of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, who might corrode human perceptions with extradimensional squamousness (Cosmic), drown human thought in alien telepathy (Psionic), or simply pull all mentation apart into pure chaos (Moral). Malevolent Voudun bokors (Spirit) and ecstatic ritualists (Magical) alike can leave witnesses with blasted minds. And as Schiller reminds us, "Whom the gods destroy, they first make mad" (Divine).

Madness Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Madness ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Madness Abilities: Compartmentalized Mind (for multiple personalities); Detect, for madness; Fearlessness; High Pain Threshold; Indomitable; Intuition; Mind Shield; and Terror (as mental confusion or as insane phobic reaction).

Deliberate attacks consist of a wide variety of Afflictions: Attribute Penalty (IQ and Will, of course, but also DX from "the shakes"), Coma (catatonia), Daze, Disadvantage (Berserk, Compulsive Behavior, Phobia, Slave Mentality . . . so many to choose from!), Drunk, Ecstasy, Euphoria, Hallucinating, Negated Advantage (especially mental advantages), Paralysis, Seizure, and Tipsy. These almost always have Malediction, and sometimes Sense-Based.

Power Modifier: Madness. The advantage belongs to the Madness power. This modifier is usually Cosmic (+50%), but may well be Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), Psionic (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

> *Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.*
>
> *– Bene Gesserit litany,* ***Dune***

The State

Embodiments and shadowy tools of the state use this power, which works on a more symbolic level than others. The state has the power to arrest, to kill, to propagandize, to keep secret, to watch. Those who bear its power might be super-soldiers assembled from the corpses of fallen heroes (Magical or Super), mysterious Men In Black embodying the secret government (Chi) or using alien technology (Super), or even tulpas given form by paranoia or patriotism (Magical). Patron deities, culture heroes, and saints can also grant this power (Divine), or patriotic necromancers invoke it (Spirit). Remember, the dark gods Nergal and Huitzilopochtli were both objects of state cults.

Talent of the State: You get +1 per level to use any ability of the State, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Abilities of the State: 360° Vision (from panoptical surveillance or symbolism); Allies (cops, secret police, soldiers, etc.); Charisma; Clairsentience (again from surveillance or symbolism); Combat Reflexes; Contact Groups (security services, law enforcement, military, etc.); Detect, for patriotism, weapons, or treason; Higher Purpose; Medium, with Specialized, Fallen heroes of the nation (-80%); and Mind Control, with Conditioning Only (to instill patriotic Fanaticism).

A hero of the State will likely have social advantages such as Clerical Investment (in theocracies), Legal Enforcement Powers, Legal Immunity, Rank, and Security Clearance. If these are genuine legal arrangements, then they're mundane traits rather than part of this power. But if they represent the sheer force of will, nationalist sorcery, or inner strength that causes loyal servants of the State to act as if such arrangements existed, they're abilities of the State!

Power Modifier: The State. The advantage belongs to the power of the State. This modifier might be Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

Taint

This is the power to decay, corrupt, poison, and otherwise taint the healthy and the pure. It likely stems from pure evil or chaos (Moral), but it's also common among witches (Magical), demonic succubi (Divine), and mysterious extradimensional meteorites (Cosmic). Vampires of all types embody and engender taint, whether they're undead necromancers (Magical), sufferers from unbalanced *p'o* (Chi), or disease-bred mutants (Biological).

Tainted Talent: You get +1 per level to use any Tainted ability, and can use earned points to acquire new abilities. *5 points/level.*

Tainted Abilities: Allies (vermin), with Summonable; Clinging, which might include a trail of slime or mold as a Nuisance Effect; Detect, for corrosion, decay, poison, or other taints; Empathy, with Accessibility, Only moral soft spots (-30%); Injury Tolerance (Unliving – or even Diffuse, for bodies composed entirely of deliquescent rot or maggots); and Slippery (covered in slime!).

Tainted attacks include Afflictions, especially with Attribute Penalty (customarily ST or HT, but anything goes), Disadvantage (moral or physical), Nauseated, or Retching; Corrosion Attacks; and Toxic Attacks. Thematically speaking, these should have Contact Agent, but some might have Melee Attack or even Malediction – and *moral* corruption can be Sense-Based, as can mind-altering perfumes or rotting fetor. Most Tainted attacks have Cyclic or Extended Duration, as applicable.

Power Modifier: Taint. The advantage belongs to the Taint power. This modifier might be Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), Cosmic (+50%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Moral (-20%).

Character Templates

These templates can be adapted to any horrific milieu – but what focus they do have is on modern (TL8) campaigning, on the grounds that *something* has to be the baseline. With the exception of *Slayer* (p. 43), they're all under 100 points, suitable for tougher Plain Folks or beginning Monster Hunters.

Academic

60 points

This is a professor, teacher, or researcher at a university or other center of higher learning. He's easy to pull into an adventure, as people often bring mysteries to a professor, hoping for expert help – and the professor may be able to pass off an adventure as "research," thus staying employed. Many fantasy-genre wizards closely resemble academics, and an academic can easily fit into horror games set in ancient Alexandria or Rome as well as modern Oxford or futuristic Trantor.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 12 [-5]; Per 12 [-5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Language (of scholarship; None/Accented) [2]. • 20 points chosen from among IQ +1 [20], Claim to Hospitality (Universities) [5 to 10], Eidetic Memory [5], Language Talent [10], Single-Minded [5], Status [5/level], Tenure [5], or Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Correctable) [-10], Bad Temper [-10*], Clueless [-10], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Combat Paralysis [-15], Curious [-5*], Delusions (Crazy pet theory) [-5], Duty (Teaching; 12 or less; Nonhazardous) [-5], Hard of Hearing [-10], Indecisive [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Lecturing) [-5], Oblivious [-5], Obsession (Proving theory) [-5*], Pacifism [-5 to -30], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], or Unfit [-5].

Primary Skills: Research (A) IQ+1 [4]-14. • *Two* "academic" skills such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Economics, Expert Skill (Egyptology, Political Science, etc.), Geography (any), History (any), Literature, Mathematics (Pure or Statistics), Psychology, or Sociology, all (H) IQ+1 [8]-14.

Secondary Skills: *Two* of Administration, Public Speaking, Teaching, or Writing, all (A) IQ [2]-13.

Background Skills: A total of 4 points in Savoir-Faire (Academic or High Society) (IQ/E), the other skills in this template, or more Languages.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Lens

Scientist (0 points): Add Lightning Calculator [2], Mathematical Ability [10/level], and more Per [5/level] to possible advantages; Loner [-5*] and Workaholic [-5] to possible disadvantages; Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-14 and Electronics Operation (Scientific, Sensors, or Sonar) (A) IQ [2]-13 to possible secondary skills; and Hazardous Materials (any) (IQ/A) to possible background skills. • Replace primary skills with: Mathematics (any) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Research (A) IQ [2]-13; and pick *either* two "scientific" skills such as Astronomy, Bioengineering (any), Chemistry, Computer Programming, Engineer (any), Expert Skill (Epidemiology, Hydrology, Natural Philosophy, etc.), Geology, Metallurgy, Paleontology, or Psychology, all (H) IQ+1 [8]-14, *or* one of Biology or Physics, both (VH) IQ+2 [16]-15.

Customization Notes

Reputation as an expert in the chosen field is common, but rarely above the +1 level; +4 likely indicates a media personality rather than a truly cutting-edge scholar, at least in the modern era (although +4 *among fellow academics* is eminently reasonable). Of course, Reputation can cut both ways – especially for researchers active in the occult. A negative Reputation for odd beliefs is possible: "Nobody on campus knows pre-Incan societies like Dr. Mayweather, but don't ask her about the Mt. Lapize cave paintings unless you want to hear her spout nonsense about bird-men."

Not all academics are experts – use below-average Wealth and reduced skill levels (and add Carousing!) to create a student to accompany the frail old Professor on his monster-hunting missions. Student athletes can add muscle, spoiled heirs sent to daddy's alma mater can provide funds and contacts, and so forth. You can build an entire party based on a small "independent study group" with some odd notions of hands-on research!

Specifics of curriculum and available knowledge vary with milieu. In a dark fantasy campaign, a professor might teach Alchemy and Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore); in a futuristic one, Expert Skill (Planetology) and Expert Skill (Xenology) are more likely. The "language of scholarship" likewise varies; under the Romans (and later, the Muslim caliphs), it was Greek, but from about 400 to 1900 A.D. in the West, anyone with any pretense to scholarship knew Latin, or claimed he did. For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, any scientist who wanted to keep up with current research had to learn German. This template doesn't include Artist (Calligraphy), Computer Operation, Theology, or other skills that may be academically necessary in some settings.

Customize your academic to reflect campaign realism level, too. In an openly magical setting (or a secret facility in a hidden-magic world), a scientist might possess Alchemy. In many pre-1920 and certain post-1920 settings, most scientists will possess some amount of Engineer skill – and cinematic ones, the Gadgeteer advantage. If starting points allow, you can build quite the larger-than-life scientist by combining this template with *Tech* (pp. 43-44). The High TL, Intuitive Mathematician, and Photographic Memory advantages, and the Science! and Weird Science skills, are suitable for even liberal-arts scholars in a rollicking cinematic setting.

Aristocrat

95 points

The aristocrat earned his money and social station the old-fashioned way: he inherited them. Large amounts of disposable income and other resources – as well as a potential lack of responsibilities – make the aristocrat easy (and fun) to play.

He might be a true aristocrat, with a peerage certified by the college of heralds, or the favored child of a wealthy industrialist. In small American towns, the banker's son may be an aristocrat; in a spacefaring campaign, the captain's daughter might hold such a place. Position, inheritance, and immunity from lesser folks' troubles are the aristocrat's lot in life. The aristocrat may feel noblesse oblige that causes him to protect his people, or he could be desperately struggling against his own family curse.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Status 1 [5]†. • *Either* Independent Income 10 [10] and Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50], *or* Patron (Wealthy and influential family; 12 or less; Equipment, +100%) [60]. • A further 20 points chosen from among ST or HT +1 [10], DX or IQ +1 [20], Alcohol Tolerance [1], one or more Allies (Bodyguard or servant; Built on 100%; 12 or less) [10], Appearance [4 to 16], Antiquary [5/level], Claim to Hospitality (Elite Society) [5 to 10], Fashion Sense [5], Heir (p. B33) [Varies], Independent Income [1/level], Luck [15], or more Status [5/level].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Alcoholism [-15], Chummy [-5], Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10], Compulsive Behavior [-5*], Debt [-1/level], Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfish [-5*], or Short Attention Span [-10*].

Primary Skills: Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+3 [8]-13.

Secondary and Background Skills: *Four* of Combat Sport (Rapier or Saber), Dancing, Driving (any), Piloting (any), Riding (any), or Sports (any), all (A) DX+2 [8]-12; Current Affairs (Business, High Culture, People, Popular Culture, or Travel), Games (any), or Gardening, all (E) IQ+3 [8]-13; Administration, Connoisseur (any), Cooking, Falconry, or Gambling, all (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; Finance or Market Analysis, both (H) IQ+1 [8]-11; Carousing (E) HT+3 [8]-13; Sex Appeal (A) HT+2 [8]-12; or Skiing (H) HT+1 [8]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.
† Filthy Rich provides +1 to Status.

Customization Notes

Family may present certain other options for an aristocrat, from hereditary Enemies to a familial Reputation as cursed, eccentric, or vampiric; see *Character Hooks* (pp. 6-8) for many more ideas. Feel free to select additional skills at whim – part of the fun of being a wealthy aristocrat is the luxury to pursue your studies in Akkadian epigraphy, Chinese porcelain, or mad science without distractions or obstructions.

Artist

70 points

The artist, seeking inspiration in uncanny lore or dream-inducing narcotics, is another character concept just waiting to be snatched into the realms of darkness. He meshes well with most horror subgenres, but works best in campaigns with an urban or cosmopolitan setting – artists need audiences. Painter, photographer, sculptor, architect, actor . . . the common element is "artistic sensitivity" that turns into sensitivity to things decidedly undecorative.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 13 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [-5]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 25 points chosen from among Appearance [4 to 16], Charisma [5/level], Fashion Sense [5], Fit [5], Gifted Artist [5/level], Musical Ability [5/level], Reputation (Brilliant or fashionable artist) [Varies], Sensitive [5], Single-Minded [5], Versatile [5], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Compulsive Behavior (Attention-Seeking) [-5*], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Manic-Depressive [-20], Nightmares [-5*], Obsession [-5* or -10*], Reputation (Unsavory or eccentric character) [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Wealth [-10 to -25], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: *One* of Dancing (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Architecture, Performance, or Photography, all (A) IQ+3 [12]-15; Artist (any), Musical Composition, or Musical Instrument (any), all (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Group Performance (any) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13 and 8 points in relevant prerequisites; or Singing (E) HT+4 [12]-14.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Stage Combat (A) DX [2]-11; Current Affairs (High Culture) or Makeup, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Acting, Connoisseur (of related art), Electronics Operation (Media), or Public Speaking, all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Body Language (A) Per [2]-13.

Background Skills: *One* of Gesture or Savoir-Faire (High Society), both (E) IQ [1]-12; Fast-Talk or Streetwise, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-13; or Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

Even horror victims need more than three skills! These might be art-related; e.g., a painter in the preindustrial era may require Chemistry for compounding paints. Points in additional template skills suit dabblers, while skills for a boring day job can help make ends meet.

Attorney

80 points

A lawyer can represent clients involved with occult phenomena and clear up any pesky breaking-and-entering charges that the other PCs happen to incur. The attorney's field of law can also draw him into horror – in *Dracula,* Jonathan Harker is a real-estate solicitor! Especially in fiction, attorneys can play the role of investigator as well as legal agent; either their practice or their prying could entangle them with the Cabal (p. 102), government conspiracies, or other powerful occult organizations.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [5]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Wealth (Comfortable) [10]. • 15 points chosen from among Attractive [4], Charisma [5/level], Contacts (Police or Street; Skill-15; 9 or less; Usually Reliable) [4/Contact], Favors [Varies], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Single-Minded [5], Smooth Operator [15/level], Status 1 [5], Voice [10], or improve Wealth to Wealthy [20] for 10 points.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Legal Ethics) [-5]. • -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Chain Smoking) [-5], Alcoholism [-15], Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Correctable) [-10], Bully [-10*], Enemies [Varies], Greed [-15*], Honesty [-10*] *or* Secret (Dishonest) [-10], Odious Personal Habits (Pedantic, Shameless, etc.) [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Overweight [-1], Sense of Duty (Clients) [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Law (any) (H) IQ+2 [12]-14. • *Three* of Fast-Talk, Politics, Public Speaking, or Research, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; or Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-12 – one of which *must* be Politics or Research.

Secondary Skills: Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11; Psychology (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; and Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Accounting (IQ/H), Criminology (IQ/A), Forensics (IQ/H), Interrogation (IQ/A), Intimidation (Will/A), Streetwise (IQ/A), or improved primary or secondary skills.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

Every bureaucratic culture since ancient Egypt has had lawyers or something similar. Modify the skills to suit the milieu (e.g., add Theology for lawyers in medieval France or modern Iran) and specialty (e.g., Accounting, for tax lawyers). Any *successful* attorney will spend some of his remaining points on Reputation and additional Wealth.

This template can also serve as the basis for police or other legal "desk-job" types, and for politicians in the Western world, including those on "oversight committees" investigating the paranormal. For desk jockeys or powerful bureaucrats, Administration is a must, and Administrative Rank, Legal Immunity, and/or Security Clearance may be necessary. For politicians, add Reputation, Status, and more Politics.

Be brave. Be true. Stand.
– Bill Denborough,
*in **It**, by Stephen King*

Child

30 points

A child can be an overly curious investigator or someone with supernatural abilities – usually psionics in the 1970s, magic now. A young psi is often an innocent victim of his powers, which can lead to complications with the authorities when the other PCs try to explain his behavior. A child can be challenging to play, not the least because of the inconvenience of adult supervision. Avoid this by choosing orphans or runaways, or by using the traditional "children's horror" model, in which bad things never seem to happen at school and parents are always conveniently oblivious to the terrors. If kids are the only people who can see the monsters in the closet, they have to keep the grownups safe and ignorant.

Attributes: ST 8 [-20]; DX 9 [-20]; IQ 9 [-20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 13 lbs.; HP 8 [0]; Will 10 [5]; Per 11 [10]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [25]; Basic Move 4 [-10]; SM -1.

Advantages: 50 points chosen from among Attractive [4], Charisma [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Legal Immunity [5], Less Sleep [2/level], Luck [15 or 30], Pitiable [5], Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15], Special Rapport [5], Talent [Varies], or True Faith [15].

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Minor) [-5]. ● -20 points chosen from among Bad Sight (Correctable) [-10], Bad Temper [-10*], Clueless [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Compulsive Lying [-15*] *or* Truthfulness [-5*], Confused [-10*], Congenial or Chummy [-1 or -5], Distractible or Short Attention Span [-1 or -10*], Gluttony [-5*], Ham-Fisted 1 [-5], Imaginative [-1], Impulsiveness [-10*], Innumerate [-5], Klutz [-5], Nosy [-1] or Curious [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Phobias [Varies], Shyness [-5 or -10], or Stubbornness [-5].

Primary Skills: Throwing (A) DX+1 [4]-10. ● *One* of Acting or Fast-Talk, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-10. ● *One* of Climbing or Stealth, both (A) DX+2 [8]-11.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (Neighborhood) (E) IQ+2 [4]-11 and Current Affairs (Popular Culture *or* Sports) (E) IQ+1 [2]-10. ● *One* of Bicycling (E) DX+2 [4]-11; Riding (Horse) or Sports (Skateboard), both (A) DX+1 [4]-10; or Swimming (E) HT+2 [4]-12.

Background Skills: *One* Hobby Skill (E) IQ+2 [4]-11. ● A total of 5 points in Artist (any) (IQ/H), Dancing (DX/A), Fishing (Per/E), Games (any) (IQ/E), Musical Instrument (IQ/H), Singing (HT/E), or Sports (any) (DX/A).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

This template uses attributes for a 10-year-old (p. B20) to build a preteen. Increase these as needed to create a "child prodigy" or the husky kid who's come into his growth spurt early.

The setting governs whether children need to worry about Wealth, whether parents or teachers count as Patrons or Contacts, and so forth. Kids vary as much as adults: a troop of Boy Scouts might have skill in Naturalist, Navigation (Land), Survival, etc. that other children wouldn't, while a gang of Dickensian urchins could have Garrote, Pickpocket, and Urban Survival, among other skills. A staple of children's horror is the kid who's into comic books, horror movies, etc. and thus has a useful (or misleading!) skill in Occultism.

Criminal

60 points

Against his will, a criminal can find himself enmeshed in matters far blacker than petty theft or even murder for hire. Like the aristocrat, this is a character concept for all seasons. Be aware, though, that the criminal who preys on his fellow PCs will hamper the unity the heroes require to confront horrors – and the teamwork the *players* need to help build the atmosphere of fear.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [-5]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5].

Advantages: Contact Group (Underworld in home city; Skill-15; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10]. ● 20 points chosen from among Alternate Identity (Illegal) [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Flexibility or Double-Jointed [5 or 15], High Manual Dexterity 1-4 [5/level], Luck [15], Night Vision [1/level], Patron (Crime boss; 9 or less) [15], Reputation ("Reliable," among criminals) [Varies], or Smooth Operator [15/level].

Disadvantages: Greed [-15*]. ● *Either* Duty (Crime boss; 9 or less; Involuntary) [-10], Enemy (Local law-enforcement agency; Watcher; 9 or less) [-5], and Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5], *or* Secret (Criminal) [-20]. ● A further -25 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Pirate's or "Stays Bought") [-5], Compulsive Gambling [-5*], Compulsive Lying [-15*], Cowardice [-10*], Kleptomania [-15*], Laziness [-10], Light Sleeper [-5], Obsession (The big score) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Reputation [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Trademark [-5 to -15], or Trickster [-15*].

Primary Skills: Streetwise (A) IQ+2 [8]-13. ● 20 points in skills relevant to your criminal pursuit, such as:

Burglar: Climbing (A) DX [2]-11; Connoisseur (Art, Coins, Stamps, etc.) (A) IQ [2]-11; Lockpicking (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; and Observation (A) Per+1 [4]-12. ● *One* of Electronics Operation (Security *or* Surveillance) or Traps, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-12.

Dealer/Bootlegger: Fast-Talk and Holdout, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; and Merchant (A) IQ+3 [12]-14.

Grifter: Acting and Fast-Talk, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Body Language (A) Per+1 [4]-12; and Sex Appeal (A) HT+2 [8]-12.

Hacker: Computer Operation (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Computer Programming (H) IQ+2 [12]-13; and Electronics Operation (Communications *or* Surveillance) (A) IQ+1 [4]-12.
Smuggler: Disguise and Holdout, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Forgery (H) IQ [4]-11; and Smuggling (A) IQ+2 [8]-13.
Street Thief: Filch (A) DX [2]-11; Pickpocket (H) DX+2 [12]-13; Shadowing (A) IQ [2]-11; and Sleight of Hand (H) DX [4]-11.
Thug: Brawling and Forced Entry, both (E) DX+2 [4]-13; and Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-11. • *Two* of Guns (Pistol) or Knife, both (E) DX+2 [4]-13; or Axe/Mace (A) DX+1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (home turf) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Running (A) HT [2]-10; and Stealth (A) DX [2]-11.
Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Carousing (HT/E), Driving (any) (DX/A), Escape (DX/H), Fast-Draw (any) (DX/E), Gambling (IQ/A), Poisons (IQ/H), Savoir-Faire (Mafia) (IQ/E), Urban Survival (Per/A), or any other "criminal" skills in this template.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

This fairly basic template suits street criminals: dope dealers, gangsters, and so forth. More refined lawbreakers should use *Aristocrat* (p. 34) or *Attorney* (p. 35); tougher ones, *Retired Soldier* (pp. 42-43). In a cinematic campaign, *any* profession might nurture an unseen criminal mastermind. To "criminalize" a template, add traits such as Enemy (Local law-enforcement agency), Greed, Patron (Crime boss), and Secret (Criminal).

Detective

80 points

Rooting out crime and rooting out horrific evil are parallel missions – the detective may easily turn from one to the other. Historical (especially Victorian and pulp-era) and modern horror seem to be the most fertile ground for sleuths, but a fantasy city or a futuristic starport might also have a crime-solver. Police investigators and private eyes each have their own problems and advantages, but both see the horror as a puzzle to be solved and a challenge to be beaten.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].
Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 13 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].
Advantages: 20 points chosen from among DX or IQ +1 [20], Will or Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Acute Vision [2/level], Administrative or Police Rank [5/level], Ally (Partner; Built on 75%; 15 or less) [9], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts (Police or Street; Skill-12; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2/Contact], Fearlessness [2/level], Intuition [15], Legal Enforcement Powers [Varies], Patron [Varies], Reputation [Varies], Sensitivity or Empathy [5 or 15], or Single-Minded [5].
Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Alcoholism [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Cop's or P.I.'s) [-5], Curious [-5*], Duty (Police department; 15 or less) [-15], Honesty [-10*] *or* Secret (Corrupt) [-5 or -10], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Nightmares [-5*], Obsession (Nailing the perp) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sadism [-15*], Sense of Duty (Clients) [-5] *or* (The City) [-10], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Workaholic [-5].
Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (City) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Criminology (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; and Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-12. • *Either* Forced Entry (E) DX+1 [2]-11 *or* Lockpicking (A) IQ [2]-12. • *Either* Forensics (H) IQ-1 [2]-11 *or* Shadowing (A) IQ [2]-12. • *Either* Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-12 *or* Shortsword (A) DX+1 [4]-11. • *Either* Interrogation (A) IQ+1 [4]-13 *or* Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-13.
Secondary Skills: Stealth (A) DX [2]-10 and Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12. • *One* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11, Boxing (A) DX [2]-10, or Karate (H) DX-1 [2]-9. • *Three* of Driving (any) (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-12; Acting, Administration, Electronics Operation (Security or Surveillance), Fast-Talk, Holdout, Photography, Research, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10; or Observation, Search, or Tracking, all (A) Per-1 [1]-12.
Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Computer Operation (IQ/E), Diplomacy (IQ/H), First Aid (IQ/E), Public Speaking (IQ/A), or any primary or secondary skill.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

Replacing the more physical skills with Computer Operation and Computer Programming yields the stereotypical "hacker detective," who trawls public and private databases for evidence of criminality – or hidden vampire bank accounts. For eccentric Sherlock Holmes types, add Cryptanalysis, Disguise, Poisons, and the like. For "occult detectives" like Fox Mulder or John Silence, Occultism comes to the fore, along with outré Expert Skills tailored to the campaign.

Doctor

90 points

Spending one's career battling disease seems to be excellent preparation for battling more supernatural menaces to public health. Between their familiarity with corpses, clinical demeanor, and undeniable utility to hard-pressed parties of demon-chasers, doctors have a natural role as investigators of the horrific.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].
Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 12 [6]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].
Advantages: 20 points chosen from among Empathy [15], Healer [10/level], High Manual Dexterity 1-4 [5/level], Higher Purpose (Saving lives) [5], Intuition [15], Language (Latin; None/Accented) [2], Resistant to Disease (+3 or +8) [3 or 5], Status 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Unfazeable [15], or Wealth [10 or 20].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Hippocratic Oath) [-5] and Duty (12 or less; Nonhazardous) [-5]. ● -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Stimulants or tobacco) [-5], Callous [-5], Charitable [-15*], Greed [-15*], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Kill *or* Self-Defense Only) [-15], Selfish [-5*] *or* Selfless [-5*], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Diagnosis and Physician, both (H) IQ+1 [8]-14. ● *One* of Pharmacy, Physiology, Psychology, or Veterinary, all (H) IQ [4]-13; or Surgery (VH) IQ-1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: *Four* of Administration, Electronics Operation (Medical), Hazardous Materials (any), Research, or Writing, all (A) IQ [2]-13; or Biology (Genetics), Expert Skill (Thanatology), Forensics, Hypnotism, or Law (Medical), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Chemistry (IQ/H), Computer Operation (IQ/E), Driving (any) (DX/A), Piloting (Light Airplane) (DX/A), Savoir-Faire (High Society) (IQ/E), Skiing (HT/H), Sports (Golf or Tennis) (DX/A), Theology (IQ/H), or any primary or secondary skill.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

In a "traditional" fantasy campaign with overt magic, the doctor's role may go to a cleric with healing spells and perhaps the Herb Lore skill. A police medical examiner has Legal Enforcement Powers and police Contacts. An EMT wants advantages such as Fearlessness and Hard to Kill, along with a high Driving skill. No doctor is likely to have Squeamish!

I run a lot.

– Carl Kolchak, in ***Kolchak: The Night Stalker***

Explorer

95 points

An explorer leads expeditions into parts unknown. Possible motivations include advancing knowledge, seeking fabulous wealth, and earning personal glory. While pure explorers are less common in modern times, this template also suits related character concepts: hired wilderness guide, cryptid-hunter, mercenary scout, wildcat geologist, doughty anthropologist, etc.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 13 [5]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5]. ● 15 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Animal Empathy [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Cultural Adaptability [10], Danger Sense [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Language Talent [10], Languages [2 to 6/language], Military Rank [5/level], Patron [Varies], Rapid Healing [5], Resistant to Disease (+3 or +8) [3 or 5], Serendipity 1 [15], or Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: -40 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Clueless [-10], Curious [-5*], Delusions [Varies], Enemy (Explorer with better backing; Rival; 6 or less) [-5], Greed [-15*], Honesty [-10*], Intolerance (any) [-5 or -10], Jealousy [-10], Loner [-5*], Miserliness [-10*], Obsession (Reach a specific place) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Sense of Duty (Comrades) [-5] *or* (Science) [-10], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Geography (Physical) and Naturalist, both (H) IQ [4]-12; and Survival (any) (A) Per [2]-13. ● *Either* Cartography *or* Navigation (any), both (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (any) (E) IQ [1]-12. ● *Two* of Boating (any), Driving (any), Piloting (any), or Riding (any), all (A) DX+1 [4]-12; or Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-13. ● *One* of Animal Handling (any), Freight Handling, Packing, or Prospecting, all (A) IQ [2]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 5 points in Anthropology (IQ/H), Archaeology (IQ/H), Climbing (DX/A), Diplomacy (IQ/H), Electronics Operation (Communications, Scientific, Sensors, or Sonar) (IQ/A), Expert Skill (Cryptozoology) (IQ/H), First Aid (IQ/E), Geology (IQ/H), Gesture (IQ/E), Guns (Rifle) (DX/E), Lasso (DX/A), Leadership (IQ/A), Linguistics (IQ/H), Photography (IQ/A), Scrounging (Per/E), Swimming (HT/E), Teamster (any) (IQ/A), or Tracking (Per/A).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

In a space campaign, include G-Experience [1 to 10] and Improved G-Tolerance [5 or 10] among possible advantages. Also add another mandatory skill: *one* of Expert Skill (Xenology) or Geology (alien world type), both (H) IQ [4]-12, or Biology (alien world type) (VH) IQ-1 [4]-11. Template cost becomes 99 points.

Journalist

65 points

A journalist is either a writer for a newspaper (respectable or otherwise), magazine, or website, or a TV or radio reporter. He's a natural for horror because investigating offbeat happenings *is his job.* A freelance journalist or blogger has a far less predictable – and probably lower – income than a regularly employed reporter, but he doesn't have to take assignments he doesn't want and is free to investigate anything that may make a salable story. Journalists might be dedicated to the truth, to the public's right to know, or to the ancient credo: "If it bleeds, it leads."

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from among Will or Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Contacts (Any; Skill-15; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [2/Contact], Intuition [15], Patron (Fairly powerful publisher or network; 9 or less; Special Abilities, Press pass, +50%) [15], Reputation [Varies], Sensitive [5], Serendipity 1 [15], or Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Chain Smoking) [-5], Alcoholism [-15], Callous [-5], Curious [-5*], Delusions ("I'm immortal when I'm carrying a notepad, camera, microphone, etc.") [-5 to -10], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Obsession (Get the facts) [-5*], Odious Personal Habits (Aggressive, Rude, etc.) [-5 to -10], Reputation [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], Vow ("Always dig up/publish the truth") [-5], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Current Affairs (any) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; and Research and Writing, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Current Affairs (any other) (E) IQ [1]-12 and Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11. ● *Two* of Area Knowledge (City) or Savoir-Faire (any), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; or Fast-Talk, Public Speaking, or Speed-Reading, all (A) IQ [2]-12. ● *One* of Typing (E) DX [1]-10; Computer Operation (E) IQ [1]-12; or Electronics Operation (Communications *or* Media) or Photography, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 5 points in Artist (Cartooning) (IQ/H), Criminology (IQ/A), Expert Skill (Conspiracy Theory) (IQ/H), History (any) (IQ/H), Law (any) (IQ/H), Market Analysis (IQ/H), Shadowing (IQ/A), or Streetwise (IQ/A).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

On-camera TV personalities tend to have Voice and above-average Appearance; on-air radio reporters often have Voice. Either may have Public Speaking as their primary skill, with Writing demoted to secondary status or entirely absent. For a photojournalist, swap Photography and Writing on the template, and replace Detect Lies with Acute Vision 1 [2]. With tweaking, this template is also suitable for "fringe investigators" such as conspiracy theorists and ufologists, and for the less-rugged breed of P.I.

See *Writer* (p. 44) for another template suitable for freelance journalists, especially bloggers.

Mystic

80 points

This is actually two related 80-point templates – one for the gifted, the other for phonies.

Practitioner

This is a true practitioner of some arcane and uncanny art. Psychics who find missing children, astrologers, palm readers, spiritual healers, and witch doctors all fall into this category – as do more "fantastic" types, like sorcerers and pagan priests – *if their gifts are genuine.*

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 9 [-10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [-10]; Per 12 [-10]; FP 9 [0]; Basic Speed 4.75 [0]; Basic Move 4 [0].

Advantages: 15 points chosen from among Animal Empathy [5], Autotrance [1], Charisma [5/level], Cunning Folk 1 [10], Danger Sense [15], ESP Talent [5/level], Intuition [15], Luck [15], Magery 0 [5], Plant Empathy [5], Reawakened [10], See Invisible (any) [15], Sensitivity or Empathy [5 or 15], Serendipity 1 [15], Spirit Empathy [10], True Faith [15], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Chronic Pain (Migraines; Severe; 2 hours; 6 or less) [-5], Delusions [Varies], Destiny [Varies], Fearfulness [-2/level], Flashbacks [-5 to -20], Guilt Complex [-5], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Light Sleeper [-5], Nightmares [-5*], Obsession (Prevent visions from coming true) [-5*], Phantom Voices [-5 to -15], Reputation (Creepy weirdo) [Varies], Shyness [-5 to -20], or Unluckiness [-10].

Primary Skills: Choose one of the 25-point practitioner packages below.

Secondary Skills: A total of 9 points in Current Affairs (Supernatural) (IQ/E), Detect Lies (Per/H), Dreaming (Will/H), Exorcism (Will/H), Hidden Lore (any) (IQ/A), Hypnotism (IQ/H), Meditation (Will/H), Mental Strength (Will/E), Mind Block (Will/A), or Research (IQ/A).

Background Skills: *One* of Acting, Fast-Talk, Gambling, or Public Speaking, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; or Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Practitioner Packages

Each of these sets of traits costs 25 points. Adjust the specialties to fit the campaign setting and character background. "Witch" represents a low-level magic-user; for a Wiccan or other pagan priest, select "Chosen" and replace Dionysus (used here only as an example) with whatever god is appropriate. Some practitioners cut across categories; e.g., a tribal shaman is potentially a chosen, fortune-teller, medium, sensitive, and weird cat (or bird, or fox, or . . .) person all in one.

Chosen: Higher Purpose (Serve Dionysus' will) [5] and Power Investiture 1 (Dionysus) [10]. ● Religious Ritual (Dionysian) and Theology (Dionysian), both (H) IQ [4]-14. ● Two spells, which will be either (H) IQ-1 [1]-13* or (VH) IQ-2 [1]-12*.

Fortune-Teller: Precognition (Can't See Own Death, -60%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%) [15]. ● Fortune-Telling (any) and Occultism, both (A) IQ [2]-14. ● True Tarot (p. 30) (H) IQ-3 [6]-11.

Medium: Autotrance [1]. ● *Either* Channeling (Aware, +50%) [15] *or* Medium (Universal, +50% *or* Visual, +50%) [15]. ● Hidden Lore (Spirits) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; and Religious Ritual (Séance) and Theology (Spiritualism), both (H) IQ [4]-14.

Oracle: Oracle [15]. ● Fortune-Telling (any) and Occultism, both (A) IQ [2]-14. ● A total of 6 points in those skills, Theology (IQ/H), or additional background skills.

Psychic Consultant: Psychometry [20]. ● *Either* Fortune-Telling (any) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13 *or* Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-14. ● *Either* Expert Skill (Psionics) (H) IQ [4]-14 *or* Occultism (A) IQ+1 [4]-15.

Reincarnated Egyptian Sorcerer: Cultural Familiarity (Ancient Egypt) [1]; Language (Ancient Egyptian; Native) [6]; and Reawakened [10]. ● Expert Skill (Egyptology) (H) IQ [4]-14. ● Four spells, which will be either (H) IQ-2 [1]-12 or (VH) IQ-3 [1]-11.

Sensitive: Autotrance [1]; Detect (Spirits) [10]; and Spirit Empathy [10]. ● Expert Skill (Pneumatology) (H) IQ [4]-14.

Touched: Second Sight (p. 18) [27]. ● Distractible [-1] and Habit (Stares off into nothing) [-1].

Weird Lady Who Talks to Cats: Allies (6-10 cats; Built on 50%; 9 or less) [12]; Animal Empathy (Specialized, Felines, -60%) [2]; and Speak With Animals (Specialized, Felines, -60%) [10]. ● Area Knowledge (Neighborhood) (E) IQ [1]-14.

Witch: Magery 1 [15]. ● Occultism (A) IQ+1 [4]-15. ● *Either* Ritual Magic *or* Thaumatology, both (VH) IQ [4]-14*. ● Two spells, which will be either (H) IQ-1 [1]-13* or (VH) IQ-2 [1]-12*.

* Includes +1 for Magery or Power Investiture, as applicable.

Customization Notes

Genuine mystics may require an Unusual Background in some campaigns.

Charlatan

Charlatans include not just phony fortune-tellers, cult gurus, and fake "intuitives," but also TV "psychics," stage magicians who scrupulously call their feats "illusions," and so on. Cynical "New Age" authors and newspaper astrologers should use *Writer* (p. 44). An amusing roleplaying challenge is the quack sorcerer, who conceals his ignorance of the occult as he slips deeper and deeper into a horror adventure. This template describes the basic charlatan, soon to be in over his head.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [-10]; Per 11 [-5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 2 [10] *or* Voice [10]. ● 15 points chosen from among Alcohol Tolerance [1], Allies (21-50 deluded fans, cult members, etc.; Built on 25%; 9 or less) [10], Ally (Trained accomplice; Built on 75%; 15 or less) [9], Ambidexterity [5], Attractive [4], Autotrance [1], Charisma [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Fashion Sense [5], Flexibility or Double-Jointed [5 or 15], High Manual Dexterity 1-3 [5/level], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Luck [15], Patron (Wealthy sucker or producer; 9 or less; Equipment +100%; Minimal Intervention -50%) [15], Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15], Serendipity 1 [15], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Social Chameleon [5], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Secret (Charlatan) [-5]. ● -25 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Callous [-5], Compulsive Lying [-15*], Cowardice [-10*], Delusion ("I have real magic powers") [-5 to -15], Enemy (Previous victims or rival charlatan; Rival; 9 or less) [-5], Greed [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfish [-5*], or Trickster [-15*]. ● Alternatively, take the full -30 points as Epilepsy [-30].

Primary Skills: Acting and Fast-Talk, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-13. ● *One* of Escape or Sleight of Hand, both (H) DX [4]-12; Fortune-Telling (any), Occultism, Performance, or Public Speaking, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Hypnotism (H) IQ [4]-12; or Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-11.

Secondary Skills: *Three* of Filch (A) DX [2]-12; Pickpocket (H) DX-1 [2]-11; Gesture or Makeup, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Disguise, Gambling, Holdout, Lockpicking, or Smuggling, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Artist (Scene Design), Forgery, Mimicry (Speech), Psychology, or Ventriloquism, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-10; Breath Control (H) HT-1 [2]-9; Meditation (H) Will-1 [2]-9; Body Language (A) Per [2]-11; or 2 points to raise one of those skills by a level.

Background Skills: *One* of Savoir-Faire (High Society *or* Police) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-11; or Observation (A) Per [2]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

Some charlatans – e.g., "psychic motor" hoaxers, fake mediums, and stage escapists – may have skills like Carpentry, Mechanic, or even Engineer.

Occultist

60 points

The occultist investigates the paranormal as a career. He might be a "true believer" or a researcher dedicated to disproving the supernatural (player's choice). Most occultists in fiction seem to be either clear-eyed, capable "occult detectives" or sheltered, theory-minded academics.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Occultist 1 [10]. ● 15 points chosen from among Will or Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Acute Senses (any) [2/level], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Detect (varies) [5 or 10], Independent Income [1/level], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Languages (dead; Broken/Accented) [3/language], Occultist 2 [10], Serendipity 1 [15], Single-Minded [5], Spirit Empathy [10], or Tenure [5].

Disadvantages: *One* of Curious [-5*], Delusions ("All tales of the occult are true!" *or* "All tales of the occult are false!") [-5], or Odious Personal Habit (Annoying skeptic) [-5]. ● -15 points chosen from among those traits or Absent-Mindedness [-15], Light Sleeper [-5], Reputation (Weird) [Varies], Stubbornness [-5], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Occultism (A) IQ+2 [4]-14† and Research (A) IQ+1 [2]-13†.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Interrogation (A) IQ [2]-12; Forensics or Psychology, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11. ● A total of 4 points in skills covered by Occultist (p. 19); remember to add +1 per level of that Talent to skill levels.

Background Skills: *Either* Current Affairs (Supernatural) (E) IQ [1]-12 *or* Expert Skill (Conspiracy Theory) (H) IQ-2 [1]-10. ● *Two* of Electronics Operation (Media), Photography, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.
† Includes +1 for Occultist.

Lenses

Ghost Hunter (+10 points): Add Language (Latin; Broken) [2]; Architecture and Electronics Operation (Parapsychology *or* Sensors), both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Exorcism (H) Will [2]-12†; Expert Skill (Pneumatology) (H) IQ [4]-12; Expert Skill (Thanatology) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; and Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore) (A) IQ+1 [2]-13†. ● This lens *includes* the 4 points of secondary skills covered by Occultist.

Occult Crime Consultant (+5 points): Add Criminology (A) IQ [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-12; and Theology (Satanism) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Vampirologist (+10 points): Add Language (Romanian; Accented) [4]; Expert Skill (Thanatology) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; and Expert Skill (Vampirology) (H) IQ [4]-12.

Customization Notes

Create an economically independent investigator by adding Wealth to this template or Occultism to *Aristocrat* (p. 34). This character concept also has much potential overlap with *Academic* (pp. 33-34), *Detective* (p. 37), *Journalist* (pp. 38-39), *Mystic* (pp. 39-40), and *Writer* (p. 44). To bring such a facet into focus, spend some leftover points on a few primary skills from the relevant template(s). In cinematic campaigns, adding The Occult! (p. 29) to *any* hero makes him an occultist.

In a more restrictive milieu like 17th-century Salem, occultists might need state or church backing (Legal Enforcement Powers or Religious Rank), or be forced to keep their involvement in the paranormal a dark Secret.

Oh them bones they make them bodies walk
Them bones, them bones
If they could only talk!

– Oingo Boingo, "Dead or Alive"

Police Officer

65 points

The policeman, like the detective (p. 37), may find that his fight against crime and disorder leads to horrors beyond the mundane. This template represents the "beat cop," using guts and organization where the detective uses brains – and beat cops. It's the more adaptable character concept; *aediles,* town watches, etc. existed for centuries before specialists actively applied logic and observation to crime-solving. A good police force has both detectives *and* policemen, and so might a good horror party.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers [5]. ● 10 points chosen from among Will or Per +1 or +2 [5/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Contacts (Street; Skill-12; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [1/Contact], Fit [5], Patron (Commissioner or city official; 6 or less) [5], or Police Rank [5/level].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Police) [-5] and Duty (Police department; 15 or less) [-15]. ● -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Tobacco) [-5], Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Honesty [-10*] *or* Secret (Corrupt) [-5 or -10], Intolerance (any) [-5 to -10], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Sense of Duty [-5 or -10], or Stubbornness [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Beat) (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Brawling (E) DX [1]-11; Criminology (A) IQ [2]-11; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-11; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Guns (Shotgun) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-12; Law (Criminal *or* Police) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-11; Shortsword (A) DX [2]-11; and Wrestling (A) DX [2]-11. ● *One* of Bicycling (E) DX+1 [2]-12; or Driving (Automobile *or* Motorcycle) or Riding (Horse), all (A) DX [2]-11.

Secondary Skills: Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Running (A) HT [2]-10; Search (A) Per [2]-11; and Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-11. ● *Either* Diplomacy (H) IQ-1 [2]-10 *or* Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Administration (IQ/A), Animal Handling (Dogs or Equines) (IQ/A), Computer Operation (IQ/E), Liquid Projector (Sprayer) (DX/E), Psychology (IQ/H), Shield (DX/E), Typing (DX/E), Writing (IQ/A), or improved primary or secondary skills.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

This template represents a typical big-city beat cop, but suitable advantage and skill choices could yield a county sheriff, a federal agent, an ex-cop, or a corporate rent-a-cop. Serving officers *must* have at least 5 points of Legal Enforcement Powers (10 points for services like the FBI; 15 points for agencies like the Gestapo) and a -15-point Duty; ex-cops, bounty hunters, and rent-a-cops have neither.

A high-powered or cinematic campaign may feature action-hero cops. Create these by adding more DX and IQ; advantages such as Combat Reflexes, Higher Purpose, and Intuition; impressive Fast-Draw, Guns, and martial-arts skills; and a broader and deeper collection of background skills.

Priest

80 points

Priest, minister, imam, rabbi . . . whatever the denomination, they (theoretically) already believe in something more than sense and science can confirm. If a clergyman is attached to a particular church, he'll often get involved its congregation's problems – some of which may be horrific. For millennia, it was a major part of the clergy's job to oppose the evil supernatural, from witches to demons to the unquiet dead. Even today, specially trained clerics (e.g., Catholic exorcists) act as supernatural "troubleshooters," and can become involved in adventures worldwide.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Clerical Investment [5]; Language (scriptural or liturgical; Accented) [4]; Religious Rank 2 [10]; and Status 1 [0]†. ● 15 points chosen from among Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Allies (Congregation or elders) [Varies], Blessed [10], Charisma [5/level], Devotion [5/level], Higher Purpose [5], Language Talent [10], Languages [2 to 6/language], Musical Ability [5/level], Religious Rank 3+ [5/level], Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15], Spirit Empathy [10], True Faith [15], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Compulsive Behavior (Religious Observance) [-5*], Compulsive Generosity [-5*], Disciplines of Faith [-5 to -15], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10*], Intolerance (Religious) [-5 or -10], Pacifism [-5 to -30], Sense of Duty (Coreligionists, All humanity, *or* All Creation) [-10, -15, or -20], Truthfulness [-5*], Vow [-5 to -15], or Wealth [-10 or -15].

Primary Skills: Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-12; Religious Ritual (own religion) (H) IQ+1 [8]-13; and Theology (same) (H) IQ [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: *Two* of Hidden Lore (any), Poetry, Research, or Teaching, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Expert Skill (Demonology or Thanatology), Musical Composition, or Musical Instrument (any), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Singing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; Mental Strength (E) Will+1 [2]-13; or Exorcism or Meditation, both (H) Will-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Parish) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13. ● A total of 6 points in Administration (IQ/A), Detect Lies (Per/H), Diplomacy (IQ/H), First Aid (IQ/E), History (any) (IQ/H), Leadership (IQ/A), Literature (IQ/H), Naturalist (IQ/H), Occultism (IQ/A), Psychology (IQ/H), or Writing (IQ/A).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Status 1 is free from Religious Rank 2 for any religion that can be openly professed in the setting.

Customization Notes

Scriptural or liturgical languages include those in which holy texts are written (e.g., Sanskrit, Tibetan, Classical Arabic, Aramaic, Greek, and Old Norse), religious rites are performed (e.g., Latin and Old Slavonic), or both (e.g., Hebrew). Clerical requirements, tasks, and range of interests vary by religion, setting, and position in the church hierarchy (if any). In many settings, clerics enjoy Legal Immunity of some variety (usually the 5-point level). Some churches might count as Patrons, providing living expenses, limited research facilities, and possibly even resources to combat supernatural horrors.

Retired Soldier

65 points

Who better to fight the forces of evil than a warrior? Soldiers are as universal as clergy and criminals, and for many of the same reasons. From the noble knight to the cynical, battle-scarred modern-day veteran, the soldier stands on the front lines against the horrors of many a game world. This template assumes a *retired* soldier; those on active duty have a hard time getting leave to go investigate haunted houses. It also supposes a combat veteran – or at least someone whose career was more rifle-oriented than "clerk-typist."

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [5]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from among ST or HT +1 [10], DX +1 [20], Will or Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Courtesy Rank [1/level], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit or Very Fit [5 or 15], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Independent Income (Military pension) [1/level], or Reputation (Decorated) [Varies].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Careful [-1], Chummy [-5], Duty (Reactivation; 6 or less) [-2] or (9 or less) [-5], Fanaticism (Patriotism) [-15], Flashbacks [-5 to -20], Intolerance (Enemy race or culture) [-5], Nightmares [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Sense of Duty (Comrades in arms *or* Command) [-5], or Workaholic [-5]. ● A *wounded* vet may have physical disadvantages such as Lame [Varies], One Eye [-15], or One Hand [-15].

Primary Skills: Guns (Rifle) (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Savoir-Faire (Military) (E) IQ [1]-10; and Soldier (A) IQ+2 [8]-12.

Secondary Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-11; Driving (any) (A) DX [2]-11; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-11; Spear (A) DX-1 [1]-10; and Throwing (A) DX-1 [1]-10.

Background Skills: A total of 5 points in Camouflage (IQ/E), Electronics Operation (Communications, usually) (IQ/A), Explosives (any) (IQ/A), First Aid (IQ/E), Forward Observer (IQ/A), Gunner (any) (DX/E), Guns (any other) (DX/E), Hiking (HT/A), Knife (DX/E), Navigation (Land) (IQ/A), Observation (Per/A), or Survival (any) (Per/A).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Lens

NCO or Officer (+25 points): Add Charisma [5/level], Penetrating Voice [1], and Voice [10] to possible advantages, and Odious Personal Habit ("By the book") [-5] to possible disadvantages. • Add IQ +1 [20]; Courtesy Rank 1 [1] (minimum); and a total of 4 points in Leadership (IQ/A), Savoir-Faire (Military) (IQ/E), or Tactics (IQ/H).

Customization Notes

Over the centuries, soldiers' skills vary more than do their other traits. For pre- and post-industrial military templates, consult suitable historical and science-fiction ***GURPS*** worldbooks. Elite special operators have much larger point totals, as illustrated in the ***GURPS*** *Third Edition* supplements ***Special Ops*** (for realistic troops) and ***Black Ops*** (for the President's secret teams of monster-hunters).

Even in the low-powered, modern-day campaign this template assumes, soldiers may have military specialties that demand other skills: Piloting and Electronics Operation (Sensors) for combat aviators, Mechanic for armored troopers, Parachuting and Stealth for airborne infantry, and so forth. Just within an ordinary infantry platoon, many of the background skills above rocket to primary-skill status for specialists like the radioman, corpsman, and machine gunners.

Slayer

160 points

The slayer seeks out monsters and rids the world of them. Everything else – knowledge, career, friends, family – comes second. Whether it's the call of an ancient order, a family tradition, God's will, or just something a man's gotta do, the slayer gets the job done. And then goes out the next night, and does it again.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 12 [2]; Will 12 [5]; Per 12 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5] and Higher Purpose (Slay two types of monster) [10]. • *Either* Combat Reflexes [15] *or* Danger Sense [15]. • A further 15 points chosen from among HP +1 or +2 [2 or 4], Will or Per +1 to +3 [5/level], Ambidexterity [5], Blessed (Heroic Feats) [10], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Fearlessness [2/level] *or* Unfazeable [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Magic Resistance [2/level], Night Vision [1/level], Serendipity 1 [15], Signature Gear [Varies], Single-Minded [5], True Faith [15], or improve Fit to Very Fit [15] for 10 points.

Disadvantages: Obsession (Destroy all monsters!) [-10*]. • -30 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Distinctive Features (Scar) [-1], Enemy (Nemesis) [Varies], Fanaticism [-15], Guilt Complex [-5], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Intolerance (Nonhumans) [-10], Loner [-5*], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Pyromania [-5*], Sense of Duty (Victims of monsters *or* All humanity) [-5 or -15], Trademark [-5], Wealth [-10 or -15], or Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: *One* of Hidden Lore (any) or Occultism, both (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Expert Skill (Vampirology) (H) IQ+1 [8]-12; or Weird Science (VH) IQ [8]-11. • *Two* of Crossbow, Guns (Pistol or Shotgun), or Knife, all (E) DX+1 [2]-14; or Broadsword or Shortsword, both (A) DX [2]-13.

Secondary Skills: Armoury (Esoteric) (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11; Karate (H) DX [4]-13; Observation (A) Per [2]-12; Shadowing (A) IQ [2]-11; and Stealth (A) DX [2]-13. • *One* of Current Affairs (Supernatural) (E) IQ [1]-11; Interrogation, Research, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; or Tracking (A) Per-1 [1]-11. • *One* of Liquid Projector (any) or Thrown Weapon (Axe, Harpoon, *or* Knife), all (E) DX [1]-13; or Two-Handed Axe/Mace (A) DX-1 [1]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 5 points in A total of 5 points in Architecture (IQ/A), Explosives (any) (IQ/A), Fast-Draw (any) (DX/E), Forced Entry (DX/E), Intimidation (Will/A), Mind Block (Will/A), Physiology (monster type) (IQ/H), Poisons (IQ/H), Running (HT/A), Tactics (IQ/H), or Traps (IQ/A).

Techniques: *Either* Beheading Blow (H) Broadsword-2 [4]-11† and Stake to the Heart (H) Broadsword-2 [4]-11†, *or* 8 points in other combat techniques.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Assumes Broadsword at 13. Adjust as needed.

Customization Notes

In a high-powered game, the slayer himself may have supernatural abilities, from See Invisible to actual magic spells. A slayer might well possess Trained by a Master, along with such arcane skills as Breath Control, Mental Strength, and Zen Archery.

Tech

60 points

You use technology to keep back the forces of unreason. Maybe you monitor the Web for vampire chat rooms, or design electric pentacles to imprison ghosts. Just because you're more comfortable with a soldering iron than a shooting iron doesn't mean you don't fight the good fight, too.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [-15]; Per 12 [-5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 25 points chosen from among Per +1 to +5 [5/level], Absolute Timing [2], Acute Hearing [2/level], Artificer [10/level], Contact Group (Online associates; Skill-15; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [10], Eidetic Memory [5], Gadgeteer [25], Gizmos [5/gizmo], High Manual Dexterity 1-4 [5/level], Less Sleep [2/level], Lightning Calculator or Intuitive Mathematician [2 or 5], Mathematical Ability [10/level], Serendipity 1 [15], Signature Gear [Varies], Single-Minded [5], or Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Caffeine or diet pills) [-5], Clueless [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Curious [-5*], Gullibility [-10*], Honesty [-10*], Lecherousness [-15*], Loner [-5*], Oblivious [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Secret (Hacker) [-5 or -10], Shyness [-5 or -10], Slow Riser [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Unfit [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-14 and Current Affairs (Science & Technology) (E) IQ [1]-13. • *Three* of Armoury (any), Electrician, Electronics Operation (any), Electronics Repair (any), Machinist, or Mechanic (any), all (A) IQ [2]-13; Engineer (any) or Computer Programming, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; or Computer Hacking (VH) IQ-2 [2]-11.

Secondary Skills: *Five* of Explosives (any), Hazardous Materials (any), Lockpicking, Photography, or Traps, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; or Expert Skill (Computer Security), Forgery, or Intelligence Analysis, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

Background Skills: *One* of Accounting (H) IQ-2 [1]-11, Scrounging (E) Per [1]-12, or Speed-Reading (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

Consider Signature Gear for your valuable prototype or thrashed-out laptop. In a pre-TL8 setting, replace Computer Operation with Research (A) IQ [2]-13. More IQ, even one level, produces a big boost in skills; you can stereotypically scrape up some of the needed points by lowering ST.

Writer

65 points

Writers of horror stories, general fiction, and nonfiction alike make good candidates for horror PCs. All writers do research and investigative work for their projects; this can lead them into adventures. Writers are less responsible than journalists, and less wary than academics. This, too, can lead them into adventures. And the horror writer may find his stories coming true – perhaps even more unsettling to him than revelation of kindred horrors might be to the debunking writer of skeptical criticism.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from among Alcohol Tolerance [1], Higher Purpose (Artistic truth and experience) [5], Intuition [15], Less Sleep [2/level], Poet [5/level], Reputation [Varies], Sensitive [5], Serendipity 1 [15], Single-Minded [5], Unfazeable [15], or Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Alcoholism [-15], Bad Sight (Correctable) [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Compulsive Behavior (Bibliomania) [-5*], Curious [-5*], Delusions [Varies], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Loner [-5*], Oblivious [-5], Shyness [-5 or -10], Slow Riser [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], Wealth [-10 or -15], or Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: Research (A) IQ+1 [4]-13 and Writing (A) IQ+2 [8]-14.

Secondary Skills: Speed-Reading (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. • *One* of Artist (Calligraphy) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-13, or Typing (E) DX+1 [2]-11. • *Two* of Area Knowledge (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Poetry or Public Speaking, both (A) IQ [2]-12; or History (any), Literature, or Psychology, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in IQ-based skills as personal subject specialties, such as:

Conspiracy Theorist: Current Affairs (Politics) (E) IQ [1]-12 and Expert Skill (Conspiracy Theory) (H) IQ [4]-12. • *Either* Occultism (A) IQ-1 [1]-11 *or* Weird Science (VH) IQ-3 [1]-9.

Morbid Poet and Ratiocinator: Criminology (A) IQ [2]-12; Cryptography and Geography (Regional; Antarctic), both (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; and Expert Skill (Thanatology) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

New England Horrorist: Area Knowledge (New England) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Astronomy (Observational) and Connoisseur (Architecture), both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; and Hidden Lore (Things Man Was Not Meant To Know) (A) IQ [2]-12.

True Crime or Mystery Writer: Criminology (A) IQ [2]-12; Forensics, Law, and Poisons, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; and Savoir-Faire (Police) (E) IQ [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

The writer traditionally differs from the detective and the journalist by not actively pursuing a story on the street. Adding skills from other templates can produce a hero who leaves his chair and keyboard behind more often. Some writers wangle teaching jobs, or (as in Victorian England) clerical sinecures; both *Academic* (pp. 33-34) and *Priest* (pp. 41-42) can be mined for possibilities. Poets tend toward *Artist* (pp. 34-35); nonfiction writers, toward *Journalist* (pp. 38-39).

The Challenge

As a player in a horror campaign, you walk a fine line between unrealistic foolishness (unless you're playing a foolish character, most likely in a one-shot) and uninteresting sobriety. By all means, analyze the clues the GM hands out, do your best to anticipate surprises and deadly traps, and don't rush in where angels fear to tread. But don't over-think every blood spatter. Worse, don't spoil your fun by stolidly preparing to confront "just another vampire." Instead, do your best to get caught up in the excitement and to help build that cooperative atmosphere of horror. Of course, in a well-oiled game, the ritual of examining death scenes and interviewing witnesses, or of packing a bandolier with silver bullets and wooden crossbow bolts, can itself help build the tension, get the players into the mood of things, and set everyone up for a grand payoff indeed.

Investigation

Believe it or not, 90% of the time, your GM *wants* you to solve his horrific puzzle, figure out the pattern of the killings, decipher the map, and get to the killing ground under your own steam. Each GM delivers clues in his own way. Learning to read your GM is a useful skill, albeit one outside the scope of this book. Failing that (or in addition to it), the "five Rs" of horror investigation can often yield information, and hence exciting action, with a minimum of aimless thrashing around:

1. Recon. Examine the scene of the horror in person and gather as much information as possible. Use psionics, spells, technology, Sense rolls, and/or information-gathering skills such as Criminology, Forensics, Observation, and Search. Map the area and treat it like a crime scene; in most horror scenarios, it probably is!

2. Research. Check out local histories, police or newspaper archives, or family records for similar happenings. Hit the occult texts for cases of comparable horrors. Occultism and Research are the obvious tools here, but Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, History, and similar skills might come into play. Interview witnesses (Acting, Fast-Talk, or just plain Charisma) or suspects (Detect Lies and Interrogation), where possible.

3. Routine. With the information from recon and research in hand, look for routines, for patterns. Watch for both regularity in the horror (similar modus operandi, timing, victims, or location) and breaks in other patterns (e.g., birds stop calling or unpredicted fog in the area). If you have a suspect, learn his routine and look for deviations from it – perhaps the aristocratic Count didn't visit his club on the night of the exsanguinations. The relevant skill varies, but Intelligence Analysis often applies. This is also a good place to try the Intuition advantage.

4. Rationale. If simply examining routines hasn't led you to either the next horror or a suspect, begin figuring out motives; see *Villainous Motives* (pp. 136-138) for some hypotheses. Why would the horror act in this way? Even irrational horrors have causes, which you can sometimes deduce from their effects. Criminology and Psychology can be useful, as can Intuition.

5. Records. This is a *player* action, not a character action – although it *can* have a character element if the investigator has Eidetic or Photographic Memory. Make copious notes on anything you uncover; keep "case files" and a game calendar to which you and the other players can refer. Pretend you're taking notes for a course and that everything will be on the final exam. Rereading these notes can set the mood for the next session, and might well trigger *your* intuition!

The Hunt's Afoot

At some point during the investigation, you'll likely find clues pointing somewhere: to another similar murder last Tuesday, or to another moonless night near standing water, or to the seemingly ageless Hungarian arms dealer. That's where you start over again, jumping back on the R's where you can. Recon and Research that earlier murder, and figure out how it fits (or breaks) the Routine. *Always* get more Recon: stake out that standing water with Observation, trail that suspicious Magyar with Shadowing, or stock up on tech and use Electronics Operation (Surveillance) for both! Keep feeding details into your model Routine or theoretical Rationale. Maybe you'll make the fiends nervous, and they'll apply pressure. The specific form that pressure takes – political heat, drugged-up cultists, astral surveillance, manticore attack – will give you more information about the Big Bad's methods, resources, and Rationale! Keep plenty of Records, and soon you'll have enough to track the horror to its lair.

Then the fun *really* begins.

> *Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.*
>
> *– Friedrich Nietzsche,*
> ***Thus Spake Zarathustra***

Monster-Hunting

In almost any horror campaign, the heroes might find themselves on the trail of a monster. In many cases, once they've found the horror, they must deal with it. This can take the form of a dungeon crawl (or its modern equivalent, the sewer-and-subway crawl), a vigil in a haunted house, or a chase through the foggy streets of Whitechapel.

In combat with horrors, your enjoyment of the game shouldn't come from reducing the monsters to targets on a board and mechanically eliminating them; it should come from feeling your character's fear and channeling it into energy and motivation. Don't cheat yourself of a horrific encounter by treating it as an exercise in orc-chopping combat. Stay in character, stay on the edge – and stay alive.

That last can take some doing. If your GM has calibrated the scenario for maximum tension, you have about a 50% chance of winning. To improve your odds, adopt some sensible strategies before you pry off that first coffin lid. The GM will be glad to see the hunters take reasonable precautions, especially if the players can convey the sense of fear, grim duty, or white-hot hatred that their alter-egos feel going into battle. Playing a competent hero won't spoil the game for your GM nearly as much as playing an incompetent one can spoil it for you. The following "five Ts" are a basic checklist for the truly dangerous monster-hunter to build upon:

1. Threat Assessment. Make sure you know what you're dealing with, how many of them there are, and how (and who, where, and when) the horrors kill. This should flow from the "five Rs" under *Investigation* (above). Occultism, Observation, and Research come in handy here.

2. Tailoring. Select the right tools for the job; e.g., wear neck protectors if fighting vampires, carry silver bullets for werewolves, and pack asafetida bombs for evil spirits.

For every mode of attack your threat assessment shows the monster to have, develop a countermeasure. Bring only what you need (a vanload of equipment will slow you down), but bring *exactly* what you need – and bring *enough* of it. This may come down to an Occultism roll, followed by Armoury (or Streetwise, if what you need is illegal).

3. Tactics. Practice unity of command. Even if you don't have a "party leader," one person should be in charge in battle. You might not be able to communicate, so make sure that everyone knows his task – and his backup task, if someone is taken out. Follow the "five Ss" of actual combat: *Sneak* up; *Secure* the area; *Strike* the horrors with your full strength at their weakest point; *Support* each other and don't split up; and *Skedaddle* if you're outgunned. Tactics and Leadership come into play here, along with such skills as Stealth, Observation, Explosives . . . and Running.

4. Targeting. Know your objective and don't get distracted. If you're there to rescue the princess, rescue the princess and get out. If you're there to kill the Vampire King, don't get sidetracked skewering zombie rats or looting the crypt. Villains *love* to expend cannon fodder to weaken their foes – and they especially love to booby-trap the treasure. This doesn't demand any specific skill, but the GM might roll secretly for Common Sense or against Tactics if the party starts to drift off target.

5. Thoroughness. Never leave a horror behind. Don't let the undead rise again to fight another day. If you must, come back in broad daylight and drench the crypt with bleach, garlic, holy water, or gasoline – maybe all four. Architecture, Housekeeping, and Search let you make sure you didn't miss a crawlspace, a blood spatter, or a murderous larva under the armoire.

The Monster-Hunter's Toolbox

Famed ghost-hunter Harry Price (1881-1948) recommended colored chalk, candles, thread, matches, a good watch, flashlights, a notebook and pencil, a camera, sandwiches, and brandy as the standard kit for investigators of haunted houses. Upgrade the camera to a camcorder or a digital mini-cam (both p. B289), and his list still works today. Before TL6, ghost-hunters use lanterns instead of flashlights (both p. B288). Prior to TL5, they lack cameras, too – but perhaps some mage or artificer has developed a special mirror that can capture a spirit's image.

You can bring along similarly special – or spectral – technology for games of techno-horror or ghost-breaking. Price wasn't out to *kill* ghosts, however, and they (probably) weren't trying to kill him, either. Lethal investigations require more-lethal gear.

Of course, the handiest "equipment" to have along on *any* investigation is probably the Gizmos advantage (p. B57)!

Investigatory Gear

Clever investigators can doubtless see monster-thwarting potential almost all of the equipment on pp. B288-289 – and in everything in ***GURPS High-Tech*** to boot. That said, for the thoroughly modern haunt-harrier, a cigarette lighter, a crowbar, a mini-recorder, and *at least* a first aid kit seem like no-brainer additions to Price's list. If the campaign style (and investigatory budget) stretches that far, headset radios offer a nice compromise between "don't split the party" and "sneak ahead to see what's going on." Similarly, a shotgun mike and night-vision goggles make scouting horrors far more survivable. Keep a shovel in the car trunk for emergency disinterments, next to the crash kit, the cable ladder (30' long, $100, 5 lbs.), and lots of spare ammo and batteries.

Some items have dual uses. Both the compass and GPS receiver can sometimes let you know when you've entered the uncanny realm by conveniently spinning around or returning nonsensical values. A cell phone isn't just handy for interparty communications; with emergency numbers on speed dial, it can provide anything from a diversion to a quick medevac (but see *The Cell Phone Problem,* p. 122).

Other useful gear includes:

Duct Tape (TL6): Holds thermocouples on walls, repairs broken gear (to the level of improvised equipment, p. B345), and serves as makeshift handcuffs (ST-3 or Escape roll to break free), rope (a 60-yard roll can be braided into a 20-yard rope that supports 200 lbs.), or direction markers, among other things. 60-yard roll: $1 ($2, for matte-black, weather-resistant tape), 2 lbs. LC4.

Hand Flare (TL6): Sets fires, warns other drivers to stay alert, and *really* annoys vampires. Burns for 30 minutes. Illuminates a 5-yard radius. $5, 1 lb. LC4.

Thermographic ("Infrared") Film (TL6): Produces Infravision (p. B60) pictures even in complete darkness, provided that heat sources are present. At TL7, false-color IR film is available. Make a Photography roll to take and develop IR photos. 24- to 36-exposure roll: $24-$36, neg. LC4.

Tone Generator (TL6): Emitting an audible tone can set up a standing wave tuned to (or resonant with) an electromagnetic ghost's frequency. This might force the bogey to manifest, or make it easier to spot. $90, 4.5 lbs., external power. LC4.

Bike Lock and Chain (TL7): Useful for tying up stronger beasts, securing doors and gates behind you, and keeping your bike safe. Price depends on DR and HP, from $100 for the lock and $10/yard for the chain at DR 5, HP 12, up to $300 for the lock and $50/yard for the chain at DR 10, HP 28. Lock weighs 0.5 lb.; chain weighs 0.5 to 2 lbs./yard. LC4.

Chemlight (TL7): A plastic tube containing chemicals that create light when mixed by shaking or bending the tube. Lasts 12 hours. Illuminates (dimly) a 2-yard radius.

Comes in a variety of colors (including infrared); some monster-hunter teams assign each man a color for easy ID. $2, 0.1 lb. LC4.

EM Field Meter (TL7): Senses electric and magnetic fields, including radio emissions. Handy in settings where ghosts or spirits are composed of electromagnetic energy! (Ghosts tend to register in the 2-8 milligauss range.) Commercial units work at relatively short ranges (1'-5'). $500, 1 lb., 10 hrs. LC4.

Fiberscope (TL7): Optical fiber within a steerable steel-mesh tube, with lenses at both ends. Can be snaked around corners, under doors, through heating ducts, etc. to provide a view of a hidden space. The tiny lens gives -3 to Vision rolls. Yard-long version with eyepiece: $4,500, 2 lbs., 1 week. LC4. (At TL8, an optional video camera and 4" LCD monitor add $500, 1 lb., but let an entire group see, and record, anything being examined.)

Infrared Filter (TL7): Placed over a flashlight to block all but IR light. Useful for scanning a dark room without giving away your own position, assuming you have IR goggles or similar – and assuming the monsters don't have Infravision! $25, neg. LC4.

Sun Lamp (TL7): Its high-UV light is useful for chasing away the winter blues – and vampires. Does *quadruple* "normal" sunlight damage as an area effect with dissipation (pp. B413-414). $225, 8 lbs., external power. LC4.

Tactical Light (TL7): This compact light source is easily mounted on a shoulder strap, a helmet, or a gun barrel – useful when you need both hands free. It's *powerful* (30,000 candlepower): HT-4 roll or be blinded for 10 seconds, if you look directly into it. *Small* (25-yard beam): $100, 1 lb., 2 hrs. at TL7; $100, 0.25 lb., 2 hrs. at TL8. *Large* (100-yard beam): $200, 2 lbs., 1 hr. at TL7; $200, 0.5 lb., 2 hrs. at TL8. LC4.

Ultraviolet Bulb (TL7): Some vampires or other monsters that react to sunlight are specifically sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light. For these foes, swap out the bulb of your flashlight or floodlight for a UV bulb. A UV flashlight beam may harm them as sunlight – or even as "concentrated sunlight," doing double damage. Ultraviolet also lets you see latent bloodstains; handy for forensic work or tracking alien ichor. $25, neg. LC4.

Power Drill (TL8): Battery-powered and portable, this tool is valuable to monster-hunters who know Forced Entry (p. B196) – especially with a diamond bit. Also helpful for a quick Carpentry roll to board up those windows when the zombies hit! $50, 2 lbs., 30 min. LC4.

Temperature Gun (TL8): This handheld, non-contact IR sensor can read surface temperatures from up to 12 yards away. It's useful for finding ghostly "cold spots" or invisible-monster "warm spots" at a distance. Aimed at a person, it can measure their body heat and thus perhaps distinguish vampires, ghouls, and so forth from the living. $400, 0.5 lb., 20 hrs. LC4.

Spectral Communications

Any technology that can record sound – from TL6 wax cylinders to superscience holotech – can pick up spirit communications buried in a room's ambient noise as electronic voice phenomena (EVP). However, EVP is random, noisy, and difficult. The attempted refinements below all exist or existed in the real world. Whether they *work* is up to the GM!

Talking Board (TL5)

A talking board (the generic term for "Ouija board") allows sitters to contact ghosts without the Medium advantage or other special abilities. The ghosts nudge the planchette (via the sitters' hands) to spell out messages – but there's no guarantee that the messages will be accurate, polite, or from any specific spirit unless the board is part of a separate summoning or compelling ritual. $40, 2 lbs. LC4.

Kirlian Camera (TL6)

Semyon and Valentina Kirlian developed this photographic technique in 1939, in Krasnodar in southern Russia. An organism or an object is placed on a photographic plate and subjected to a high-voltage, high-frequency electric discharge. Developing the plate reveals a halo or an aura with a successful Photography (Spirit) roll. The plate can be set wherever a ghost is likely to appear, and the camera triggered remotely. Kirlian photographs require low-speed film; the shutter stays open for up to three seconds. They reveal any spirits, and the aura of any living (or undead) beings in contact with the plate. The GM may require Expert Skill (Psionics), Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore), or Occultism to *interpret* these photos.

TL6: Wet-plate camera with plates: $1,000, 50 lbs. LC4. No-frills camera with polarized film: $595, 3 lbs. LC4.

TL7: Modular camera with frequency tuner, tabletop electrode plate, and real-time polarized viewer: $1,200, 6.5 lbs. LC4.

TL8: Digital camera with "liquid sample" attachments and real-time motion-capture technology, including rudimentary aura-analysis software that provides Expert Skill (Psionics)-12 or +2 to the user's skill for this one purpose: $9,700, 11 lbs. LC4. Active-sensing Kirlian goggles that grant Night Vision 7 and Detect (Spirits): $12,500, 3.5 lbs., 5 hrs. LC4.

I set out for home, where I bathed, ate, and gave by telephone an order for a pickaxe, a spade, a military gas mask, and six carboys of sulphuric acid, all to be delivered the next morning.

– H.P. Lovecraft, "The Shunned House"

Necrophone (TL6)

In the October 1920 issue of *Scientific American,* Thomas Edison announced that he was working on the design of a machine to contact the spirits of the dead. No plans or prototypes were discovered in his laboratory after his death in 1931. In a séance 10 years later, Edison directed two electrical engineers to a blueprint of the device.

Edison's necrophone is a sensitive electrical valve, powered by a chemical electrolyte solution, which amplifies spirit voices captured by a large, trumpet-shaped aluminum dish-aerial apparatus. The ghosts speak through a microphone hooked up to the valve. Tuning the necrophone to a specific spirit requires something connected to that spirit or a summoning ritual – and the ghost isn't *required* to answer. To use the device, roll against Electronics Operation/TL6 (Parapsychology). $800, 22 lbs., external power. LC4.

Spiricom (TL7)

In 1980, electrical engineer George Meek and medium Bill O'Neil built Spiricom, a machine for communication with the dead. They used it to communicate with deceased NASA scientist George Mueller, who helped them perfect the Spiricom Mark IV by 1982. This system uses multiple-frequency tone generators to isolate ghostly voices from a room's "white noise," and creates a spiritual "carrier wave" to speak with or summon a specific spirit. Ascended and evolved spirits come in on the 29.5 MHz band or higher; tuning the Spiricom to lower frequencies contacts baser, even inhuman, spirits.

Operating the Spiricom requires 1d×10 minutes of tuning and a successful Electronics Operation/TL7 (Parapsychology) roll. The technology functions far more reliably with a medium; without one, attempts to contact a specific spirit are at -6. Mark IV: $3,200, 80 lbs., external power. LC4.

Combat Gear

This equipment is just a start. For even more fearsome paraphernalia, see ***GURPS Loadouts: Monster Hunters.***

Armor and Protection

Holy Water (TL0): Holy water may burn some monsters like acid (see *Acid,* p. B428). If so, then holy water from holy wells, lakes, or rivers (e.g., Glastonbury, Lake Nemi, the Jordan, or the Ganges) might do extra damage. Of course, it's hard to test in advance. Holy water is free from the font at the front of any Catholic or Orthodox church; water from a specific source costs more. Anyone with Clerical Investment can bless water with one minute and a Religious Ritual roll. See *Holy Water Heresies* (below) for some further options. Water, holy or impious, weighs 1 lb./pint. LC4.

Crucifix (TL1): A crucifix or other holy symbol may provide protection or just comfort. Small *silver* model: $25, neg. LC4.

Electric Pentacle (TL6^): Invented by Thomas Carnacki in 1907, this device consists of mercury-vapor tubes set in a pentagram shape, wired in parallel to an induction coil, powered by two lead-acid batteries. The tubes emit specific wavelengths of blue light that repel spirits; ghosts or demons that wish to cross the light barrier must *win* a Quick Contest of Will vs. the barrier's DR.

Holy Water Heresies

In the modern world, only Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians doctrinally believe in holy water as a method of resisting or repelling evil forces. Some High Church Anglicans, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists use water ritually, if not explicitly to zorch demons. A hard-core Evangelical Protestant (or 17th-century Puritan) would consider holy water frivolous at best, idolatrous at worst – using it might *expose* the wielder to evil! Fantasy religions could have their own intricacies: perhaps the Fire God condemns holy water. The GM will have to adjudicate the theological implications for his campaign, or just let the Pope (and Hammer Films) do it.

The GM might be understandably nervous about allowing monster-hunters potential access to sprayer trucks full of vampire-killing solvent, or feel that toting "Holy Super-Soakers" cheapens the campaign's Gothic tone. The rules as given essentially track Catholic teachings on holy water. For GMs feeling their inner Martin Luther, here are some heretical variants:

Donatist Variant: Anyone without at least one of Blessed, Power Investiture, or True Faith has -4 on his Religious Ritual roll to create "vampire-proof" holy water. Alternatively, any vampire, demon, etc. vulnerable to holy symbols has the 0-point feature "Affected Only by True Faith," and the fearless vampire-slayers had better hope that the priest who blessed the font at St. Patrick's was truly faithful!

Jansenist Variant: The wielder has to maintain suitable reverence for the holy water for it to retain its sacramental status. He must roll vs. Will *each minute* that the water is contained in an inappropriate vessel (squirt gun, Big Gulp cup, etc.), and whenever he blasphemes, pollutes, or otherwise acts irreverently toward it. Failure means the holy water reverts to mundane water. Part of Armoury (Esoteric) (p. 28) might be the secret of inscribing a water gun with angelic glyphs, or building it from chased silver and crystal. The charitable GM may allow the wielder who sings a hymn or chants a prayer while toting the "sacred fire hose" to make a Religious Ritual roll and add his margin of success to these Will rolls while the prayer or hymn continues.

Valentinian Variant: Blessing water takes 10 seconds per gallon, as the "sacredness" must propagate through the pipes or across the swimming pool. During this time, the celebrant must take constant Concentrate maneuvers. This at least somewhat constrains the old "bless the sink and hit the fire alarm" plan.

The pentacle protects against spirits and their abilities only – but even fully materialized spirits or possessed humans cannot cross it, or throw anything through or at the tubes. The delicate and touchy tubes require an hour and a successful Electrician/TL6 roll to set up. Any critical failure on a physical skill by someone inside the pentacle or close to a tube is likely to break a tube, and hence the barrier, with a misplaced foot or fist. A 40-tube electric pentacle is 10.5' in diameter (33' in circumference), and has enough room in the central, protected pentagon for one person, who sits on the battery pack. More tubes allow larger pentacles, but DR only increases with more or more-efficient batteries or induction coils (or transformers). 40-tube pentacle with DR 30: $2,500, 20 lbs., 8 hours. LC4.

Neck Protector (TL7): A Lexan neck protector for ice hockey goalies ties around the wearer's throat, providing DR 7 vs. *crushing* and *cutting* attacks to the neck – including vampire bites. It gives only DR 3 against all other damage types. Investigators may want to replace the laces with a chain. $30, 0.5 lb. LC4.

Shark Suit (TL7): In 1978, Jeremiah Sullivan invented a full-body suit of mail for divers, strong enough to withstand the bite of all but the greatest of white sharks. His NEPTUNIC armor is ideal for deep-pocketed heroes chasing Very Big Bads. Flexible, and designed to be worn over a wetsuit, it gives DR 16* vs. *cutting* damage, DR 4* otherwise. Steel and laminate (TL7): $2,600, 18 lbs. LC4. Titanium (TL8): $4,600, 10 lbs. LC4.

Scent Masking (TL8): This specially treated clothing for hunters keeps the wearer's scent inside the fabric, giving -4 to all Tracking and Sense rolls to follow or find him wholly or partly by smell. Ideal for sneaking up on – or away from – werewolves! Costs 200% of clothing cost. LC4.

Helpful Herbs

Asafetida: The pungent resin of *Ferula assafoetida,* a tall, leafy plant native to northern India, Iran, and Afghanistan. It can grow wild in any high, dry climate, such as the American Great Plains. Medieval magicians used its nauseating smell in exorcisms and other rituals to drive away evil spirits. A common spice in Persian and Indian cuisine, most Westerners know it as the "active ingredient" in Worcestershire sauce. Asafetida powder, cut with rice flour to deaden the smell, is $3 for a small jar (6 oz.) in a specialty grocery store; the pure resin costs $10 an ounce and is harder to come by.

Garlic: Readily available at any supermarket; a head of garlic (*Allium sativum*) costs $0.50. Native to central Asia, garlic now grows wild as far as Italy and France, and can thrive in gardens in any temperate region. In some campaigns, garlic *oil* (which makes up about 0.1% of the plant) will have a more powerful effect – perhaps four times that of raw garlic – on susceptible monsters. The principal components of garlic oil are a variety of allyl sulfides; they don't exist in garlic naturally, but must be catalyzed by heat and water.

Wolfsbane: A blue-purple-, white-, or yellow-flowered plant, *Aconitum vulparia* is common in the Swiss Alps. It can be grown as a garden plant in any temperate region; it's a hardy and handsome perennial. The alkaloid aconitine, which can be extracted from the plant, is a deadly poison. Many herb shops carry wolfsbane, but it's neither fresh nor particularly potent (werewolves might get +3 to endure its smell). A sachet of wolfsbane is $15. Fresher, more-potent wolfsbane can be found at herb farms ($5 for an effective dose), or in its wild environment with three hours of searching and a successful Biology (Botany), Herb Lore, Naturalist, or Poisons roll.

Improvised Weapons

Monster-hunters – especially Plain Folks – don't always have recourse to an arsenal of broadswords or submachine guns. Rather the opposite; horror often comes from restricting or even *removing* the heroes' options! Whether looting the hardware store as the zombies attack or hiding in the garage from the psycho killer, you may have to improvise.

Stats for many handy finds appear on the *Improvised Melee Weapons Table* (pp. 50-51) and *Improvised Ranged Weapons Table* (p. 51). Some items require additional notes:

Cross (TL0): Combat stats assume a foot-long (or thereabouts) metal cross grabbed up from an altar or similar. If it's *silver,* it will damage vulnerable horrors regardless of whether the wielder has True Faith . . . which might foster an effective Delusion ("I'm blessed by the Lord!")!

Glass Shard (TL2): This weapon usually makes its appearance when a psycho killer has his prey cornered. Nearby is a broken window or aquarium, a shattered mirror, or a fallen photograph with an enclosed frame. The victim picks up a knife-shaped chunk of glass and goes for the killer's eyes – or his hand, if he reaches out. If the glass doesn't break and she has her hand protected, she might keep it when she flees. Breaks on impact with *any* DR. User must improvise a handle or suffer thrust cutting damage to the hand with each attack.

Fire Extinguisher (TL6): Refilled with asafetida, holy water, incense, or silver nitrate, it can smite the demonic instead of merely mortal flames.

Flare Pistol (TL6): This single-shot, break-open weapon is the best thing to shoot at mummies. Ever. Inflicts 1d burn per second for 10 seconds after impact, while merrily illuminating the whole tomb – or at least a 5-yard radius.

Flashlight (TL6): A flashlight with an ultraviolet bulb (p. 47) becomes a death-ray against UV-sensitive monsters. It stays lit for five hours, giving it essentially "infinite" ammunition in combat – unless the fight follows four hours and 59 minutes of exploring a dark house! These stats are for a rugged, three-cell police flashlight, which can double as a baton (p. B273) in melee.

Water Balloon (TL6): Use the rules for Molotov cocktails (p. B411), but liquid-filled balloons *always* burst on impact. Pack of 10 party balloons: $2, neg.

Chainsaw (TL7): Uses Forced Entry for its *intended* purpose (e.g., cutting through a door), but Two-Handed Axe/Mace in combat. Its armor divisor is (0.5) when striking or parrying anything metal, concrete, or comparably hard (but *not* flesh, wood, plaster, etc.).

If it fails to penetrate DR, it can malfunction. Roll 1d: on 1-2, nothing happens; on 3-5, the chainsaw stalls and must be restarted; on 6, the chain snaps, doing 1d cutting damage to the wielder (at TL7) or simply breaking the saw (at TL8). $150, 25 lbs. (13 lbs. at TL8), 2 hrs.

Lawnmower (TL7): Use a lawnmower to kill zombies by picking it up in two hands and holding it in front of you, blades whirling. A mower uses Shield skill at -2 (giving -2 to hit and -1 to Block), and thus can make a shield rush (p. B372). It counts as a medium shield – that is, it has DB 2, giving +2 to damage in a rush. Use shield-rush damage to determine who falls, but the *target* suffers a further 1d cutting damage no matter who falls. If you fall down while wielding a lawnmower, roll 1d: on a 1, it lands on you, doing 2d+1 cutting to a random body part! A mower provides DR 4 from the front.

Pepper Spray (TL7): An aerosol spray canister loaded with capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili peppers. The victim must make two HT-4 rolls: one to resist coughing (see *Afflictions,* p. B428) and another to resist blindness (p. B124). Especially effective against creatures with Acute Smell, who resist coughing at a *further* penalty equal to their advantage level; e.g., a werewolf with Acute Smell 3 would resist coughing at HT-7! Investigators might reload the sprayer with asafetida, consecrated oil, garlic, incense, or anything else likely to harm their horrific foe.

Paintball Gun (TL8): Use the paint to aid with Tracking – or reload the balls with holy water, garlic oil, etc. The CO_2 cartridge that powers the pistol lasts for 30 shots between replacements.

Squirt Carbine (TL8): A powerful toy water gun charged with compressed air by pumping the action. Filling the two-pint water tank takes 10 seconds; removing the tank and replacing it with a spare takes only two Ready maneuvers. After that, pressurizing the firing chamber takes *another* five seconds. Fill it with holy water, luminous paint (for Tracking purposes), or garlic oil and get spraying. Avoid silver nitrate – it will dissolve the plastic!

Improvised Melee Weapons Table

Terms and notation follow those used in the tables on pp. B271-274. The additional "SP" column indicates the skill penalty to use the improvised weapon with the indicated weapon skill; e.g., a board with a nail in is wielded using Axe/Mace skill at -2. All of these improvised weapons are LC4.

Weapon	*SP*	*Damage*	*Reach*	*Parry*	*Weight*	*ST*	*Notes*
AXE/MACE (DX-5, Flail-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-3)							
Baseball Bat	0	sw+1 cr	1	0	2	8	
Board with Nail	-2	sw-2 imp	1	-1U	2	8	[1]
Boat Hook	-2	sw-1 imp	1	0U	3	10	[1]
Cross	-2	sw cr	1	0	2	8	
Garden Weasel	-2	sw-1 imp	1	-1U	3	8	[1]
Hammer	0	sw+2 cr	1	0U	3	10	
Tire Iron	-2	sw+1 cr	1	0	2	10	
BROADSWORD (DX-5, Force Sword-4, Rapier-4, Saber-4, Shortsword-2, or Two-Handed Sword-4)							
Pool Cue	-1	sw cr	1	0	2	9	
or	-1	thr-1 imp	1	0	–	9	
KNIFE (DX-4, Force Sword-3, Main-Gauche-3, or Shortsword-3)							
Box Cutter	0	sw-3 cut	C, 1	-1	0.25	5	
Fondue Fork	-1	thr-2 imp	C	-1	0.25	5	
Glass Shard	-2	sw-3(0.5) cut	C, 1	No	0.1	4	
or	-2	thr-1(0.5) imp	C	No	–	4	
Machete	0	sw-1 cut	C, 1	0	1.5	7	
or	0	thr-1 imp	C	0	–	7	
Power Drill	-2	1d+2(2) pi++	C	-1U	2	8	[1]
Scissors	-1	thr-2 imp	C	-1	0.5	5	
Screwdriver	-1	thr-2 imp	C	-1	0.25	5	
Straight Razor	-1	thr-2 cut	C	No	0.1	4	
Wooden Stake	0	thr(0.5) imp	C	-1	0.5	5	
SHIELD (DX-4)							
Lawnmower	-2	Special	1	No	25	10†	
SHORTSWORD (DX-5, Broadsword-2, Force Sword-4, Jitte/Sai-3, Knife-4, Saber-4, Smallsword-4, or Tonfa-3)							
Hand Flare	-2	1d-4 burn	1	0	1	6	

Improvised Melee Weapons Table (Continued)

Weapon	*SP*	*Damage*	*Reach*	*Parry*	*Weight*	*ST*	*Notes*
SPEAR (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Staff-2)							
Pitchfork	-2	thr+3(0.5) imp	1*	0U	5	11	[2]
two hands	-2	thr+4(0.5) imp	1, 2*	0	–	10†	[2]
Post-Hole Digger	-4	thr+2 cut	1, 2*	0U	12	13†	
TWO-HANDED AXE/MACE (DX-5, Axe/Mace-3, Polearm-4, or Two-Handed Flail-4)							
Chainsaw	-2	sw+1d cut	1	0U	25	11‡	[3]
Chair	-2	sw+2 cr	1	0U	10	11‡	
Circular Saw	-3	sw+3(2) cut	1	-1U	20	11‡	[3]
Golf Club, Nine Iron	-2	sw+1 cr	1, 2	0U	1.5	10†	[4]
Golf Club, Putter	-2	sw cr	1, 2	0U	1	10†	[4]
Hedge Clippers	-2	thr imp	1	0U	3	8†	
or	-2	sw+2 cut	C	No	–	8‡	[3, 5]
Shovel	-2	sw+3 cut	1, 2*	0U	6	12‡	[6]
Sledgehammer	-2	sw+4 cr	1, 2*	0U	15	13‡	

Notes

[1] May get *stuck* (p. B405). A power drill can be freed in one turn without a ST roll by reversing the motor.
[2] Targets have -1 to Dodge, +1 to Block and Parry. Can strike to disarm (p. B401) *without* -2 to hit for using a non-fencing weapon.
[3] Crippling damage to a limb amputates it!
[4] Can be swung at *full* Sports (Golf) skill.
[5] If closed on neck or limb.
[6] Treat as *cheap* (p. B274).

Improvised Ranged Weapons Table

Terms and notation follow those used in the tables on pp. B278-279, with the addition of an "SP" column as explained for the previous table.

Weapon	*SP*	*Damage*	*Acc*	*Range*	*Weight*	*RoF*	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*	*Cost*	*Notes*
BEAM WEAPONS (PISTOL) (DX-4, other Beam Weapons-4, or Guns (Pistol)-4)												
Flashlight	0	Special	–	5/10	1.5	Jet	Special	4	-2	–	$30	
GUNS (GRENADE LAUNCHER) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -4)												
Flare Pistol	0	Special	1	10/330	1.8/0.2	1	1(3)	8	-2	2	$480	[1]
GUNS (PISTOL) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)												
Nail Gun	-4	2d-1 pi-	0	5/25	8	1	50(3)	11†	-4	2	$350	
Paintball Gun	-3	1d-3(0.2) cr	1	2/30	2.1/0.07	1	10+1(5)	8	-2	2	$140	[2]
follow-up		Special										
LIQUID PROJECTOR (SPRAYER) (DX-4, or other Liquid Projector at -4)												
Fire Extinguisher, Large	-2	Special	0	3	20	1	20	10†	-5	2	$75	[3]
Fire Extinguisher, Small	-2	Special	0	2	8	1	8	8	-4	2	$50	[3]
Pepper Spray	0	Special	–	1, 2	0.1	Jet	20	3	-1	–	$10	[4]
LIQUID PROJECTOR (SQUIRT GUN) (DX-4, or other Liquid Projector at -4)												
Squirt Carbine	0	Special	–	8	3.5/2	Jet	2	4†	-3	–	$30	

Notes

[1] First range figure is *minimum* range, not 1/2D. Flares are $1, 0.2 lb. apiece.
[2] Can be fired at *full* Guns Sport (Pistol) skill.
[3] Cone attack (p. B413). Puts out fires immediately on a roll of TL+2 or less.
[4] Treat as a melee weapon with Reach 1, 2.

Silver Weapons

These rules elaborate on and replace those on p. B275. As explained there, pure silver melee weapons or arrowheads cost 20 times as much as ordinary steel ones, *if they can be found,* but break as if *cheap.* Silver-coated or -edged weapons cost triple list price.

Silver *bullets* must be made of solid silver or silver alloy; silver coating won't do. When they can be found (roll vs. Area Knowledge to locate a willing gunsmith), they cost 50 times list price. Pure silver is soft, and will foul the barrel – and possibly the action – of rifled firearms, giving -1 or worse to Acc and Malf. (GM's discretion) after firing once. Jacketed hollow-points avoid this problem; the jacket protects the barrel, and the projectile mushrooms on impact, exposing the target to the silver.

Making Silver Weapons

Someone with a suitable Armoury specialty can *make* silver weapons. An outsider asked to do this will likely know what the heroes are up to. While this might lead to a new ally, it will probably just start rumors that the PCs are armed, dangerous lunatics. In a world where the Cabal (p. 102) is strong, word of such a purchase may quickly reach the wrong ears . . .

Hand-loading cartridges for firearms requires a roll against Armoury (Small Arms *or* Esoteric). This isn't difficult with proper tools – which include a blowtorch and specially made molds that can withstand molten silver – but any improvisation gives at least -3 to skill (GM's decision). The GM should roll in secret. Success means a batch of reliable ammunition. Failure reduces the gun's Malf. (p. B279) by the margin of failure when firing that ammo; failure by 10+ or critical failure reduces Malf. by 10!

Shotgun shells can be loaded directly with silver coins, provided that the coins aren't too large for the bore. Dimes are just right for 12-gauge shells; larger coins or smaller bores mean getting out the tin snips. Even today, you can buy a couple of dozen worn silver dimes in any major American city and nobody will raise an eyebrow; at worst, the salesman will mark you as a survivalist stocking up on precious metals (U.S. dimes were 90% silver until 1965). Apply -1 to Acc, and *halve* Damage and Range. Otherwise, treat hand-loaded shells exactly as any other hand-loaded ammunition.

Damage from Silver Weapons

Against targets with no special weakness to silver, silver weapons work normally regardless of purity. They're only extra-effective against creatures with Vulnerability (p. B161) to silver, or with silver as a Bane limitation on DR (p. 14) or Regeneration (p. 18).

Pure Silver: DR with Bane doesn't count, Vulnerability causes its listed wounding multiplier, and Regeneration with Bane can't restore HP lost to the attack.

Silver Alloy: Coin and jewelry silver are usually alloyed with copper. The amount of silver in the alloy is expressed as its *fineness,* in parts per thousand. A fineness of 925 (e.g., 1880s English coin silver) means the alloy is 92.5% silver; a fineness of 500 (e.g., 1920s English coin silver) means the alloy is 50% silver. Modern coins contain no silver! For alloy weapons, multiply DR with Bane by the percentage of silver to determine how much DR is negated; subtract one from Vulnerability's wounding modifier, multiply the difference by this percentage, and add one again to find the new wounding modifier; and multiply HP inflicted by this percentage to find the size of the wound that Regeneration with Bane can't heal. Injury, DR, etc. round *down* in all cases.

Example: A 60% silver bullet fired at DR 10 (Bane, Silver) encounters DR 4. Against a target with Vulnerability (Silver ×3), find the wounding modifier by subtracting 1 from 3 to get 2, multiplying the difference by 0.60 to get 1.2, and then adding the result to 1 to get ×2.2. If the bullet inflicts 5 HP of injury, Regeneration (Bane, Silver) can only restore 2 HP.

Silver-Coated or -Edged: Treat as 50% silver under these rules. The material used for the coating must be at least 90% silver. Cheap "silver" jewelry and tableware are thinly plated with silver alloy; this metal has no special effect on fell beasts.

The Achilles' Heel and Hindrance limitations on Unkillable (p. B95) are written as "all or nothing": silver kills or prevents healing, full stop. The GM decides how much silver is "enough" to trigger those and similar limitations. Folklore and literature give a distressingly consistent answer: only *pure* silver works. In campaign with a more pseudoscientific feel, the presence of even silver plating, silver nitrate, or silver alloy may be enough to interrupt monstrous biochemistries – potentially by doing ongoing (Cyclic) toxic damage.

Silver Nitrate

Dissolving silver in nitric acid produces silver nitrate, a white, caustic salt. It's most often found in solutions of water, isopropanol, or other liquids, at concentrations from 1% to 10%. Such solutions are easily manufactured with a Chemistry roll, or bought in lab-supply stores for $175/pint. They can replace the foam in fire extinguishers, gas in teargas grenades, and so forth. Silver nitrate is too caustic to work in plastic or rubber weapons or casings, though.

The GM decides how a silver nitrate solution affects monsters vulnerable to silver. It might burn them like acid (p. B428) if splashed on them. An injection via a syringe or a hollow-point bullet may well do follow-up damage – and if the monster circulates blood (unlike most undead), this injury would be Cyclic (p. B103). It's also up to the GM how concentration affects damage. But note that even if a silver nitrate hollow-point is only 10% as powerful as a solid silver bullet – and even if a silver slug does toxic damage until removed – curing silver nitrate poisoning requires chelation or a full transfusion (Physician skill plus specialized facilities)!

Magic Bullets

The vast panoply of specialized ammunition is a topic for ***GURPS High-Tech,*** not for ***Horror,*** but a few ammo types deserve comment:

Dragon's Breath: This zirconium-based 12-gauge shotgun shell emits a gout of flame – a cone 10 yards wide at maximum range (see *Area and Spreading Attacks,* p. B413) – for three seconds after being discharged. This restricts the weapon to firing once every four seconds. Such ammo shouldn't be fired from an auto-loader, which would cycle while the round was still burning! Damage is 1d-2 burn instead of the gun's usual damage; Range becomes 75. Six rounds: $37, 0.85 lb. LC2 (LC1 in some U.S. states).

Hollow-Point: Filling these bullets' hollow points with holy water, silver (or silver nitrate), garlic oil, or whatever else strikes your superstitious fancy requires Armoury (Small Arms *or* Esoteric). An armorer with hand-operated reloading equipment (automatic equipment is unlikely for such unusual loads!) can crank out 20 rounds per hour. Use the rules for hollow-point ammunition on p. B279, adding the effects of one dose of the filler as a follow-up attack.

Incendiary: Usually containing white phosphorus, incendiary bullets add the Incendiary modifier (pp. B105, B433) to the gun's usual damage. Most mummies count as Flammable under the rules on p. B433. Multiply ammo cost by 1.5.

Wooden Bullets

Any smoothbore firearm can fire a wooden bullet without modification. For rifled guns, use a metal-jacketed wooden slug. Either *halves* Damage and Range.

By loading a blank cartridge in the breech, you can fire a wooden stake of the right diameter from the muzzle of a manually operated shotgun. This uses *slug* Damage and Range divided by three; makes damage type impaling; and drops Acc to 0. Reloading takes two *extra* Ready maneuvers (to get the stake and insert it in the barrel).

If using a manual, smoothbore grenade launcher, you can instead replace a baton round with a wooden stake. (Or split the difference: During the 1950s, the British used teak baton rounds for riot control in Hong Kong and other Asian postings.) Dmg 1d+1 imp, Acc 1, Range 20/150. $15.

If any wood *anywhere* in the heart is fatal, frangible bullets made of hardwood splinters may be effective. Against anything but vampires, these do little damage. Add an armor divisor of (0.5); objects with neither DR nor a Vulnerability to wood get DR 1, while against targets with DR, overpenetration (p. B408) doesn't occur. Change damage type: pi- becomes pi, pi becomes pi+, and pi+ becomes pi++. Multiply Range by 0.9. Any vitals hit counts as a hit to the heart on vulnerable creatures.

Super-secret government programs or inspired esoteric armorers may invent "reinforced charcoal" or "carbon polymer" bullets that count as wood without changing any stat but cost. And if *any* kind of carbon works, you could always hand-load a shotgun shell with diamonds for the most expensive vampire-killing round ever!

Chapter Two

Things That Go Bump in the Night

Brother Kiril spoke firmly to the stammering farmer. "If your horses are tired in the morning, and your wife seems pale, what is that to me? It is some sickness, or perhaps she rides at night to a lover." The farmer was too frightened to take offense. "Her b-brother was a heretic, a Bogomil. They gave him their rites when he died . . . y-you weren't here yet." Brother Kiril didn't understand at first. "You mean . . . he's not truly dead? No, not truly buried . . . Show me where."

The farmer refused to go himself, and his directions were confused, and the sun had vanished by the time Brother Kiril reached the gravesite. He shivered, and not just from the night chill. The Greeks had wild stories of walking corpses . . . and many Bogomils were Greeks. Heretics had strange lore, too, filthy Gospels full of . . . full of things best not thought of, not at an unsanctified grave under a new moon.

*Brother Kiril felt it before he saw it, a dank wind and the pressure of staring eyes . . . and a horrible, all-consuming thirst. It looked like mist at first, with two sparks dancing in it, and it floated above the grave of the . . . "**Eretikos**?" Kiril asked, "Heretic? **V'a' pir**?"*

The response was like cold knives in Kiril's eardrums. "A drinker from outside? One who takes communion outside your church? No . . ." but the voice reconsidered. "Or . . . yes. I take my communion elsewhere. I am a Drinker from Outside. You have named me, Kiril Oseyvich." Now it looked like a man, at once queerly bloated and stringy, forming claws and teeth before the monk's staring eyes. "I am the cold wind of plague, and the blood on the pillow in the morning. I am the rat that devours your barley, and the wolf that gnaws your children. I am the death that walks among you unseen. I am the desire you have for Greek gold and young girls."

Now it looked merely lean, like one starving, and stared like coals of fire. "I am the stranger come to town to dig new graves. I am the interrupted funeral that undoes the last rites . . . or the blasphemer who performs them . . . inadequately. Yes, Kiril Oseyvich. I am Vapir. You have named me, as Adam named the beasts that God saw were good. And you shall live this night because of it."

Brother Kiril sought a transfer to a new village, and eventually received one, because the villagers complained of his queer behavior at funerals. In his new village, he was implicated in scandal and hanged himself, creating an even greater scandal. He was buried at the crossroads, but because of a sudden storm, his body was not beheaded as befit a suicide.

Forty days later, Brother Kiril crawled out of the dirt. He knew what he was.

On the other side of the coin from the heroes – pulling and tugging at the shadowy corners of the story and setting – lurk the monsters. A monster isn't just some big, slobbery ooga-booga thing with an insatiable appetite for babysitters, or a moth-eaten piece of leftover Transylvanian scenery. The monster is, at its heart, the alarm bell for horror. It's the signal that Something Has Gone Very Wrong.

Going back to the original Latin *monstrum,* "monster" originally meant "wonder" or "portent." The monster was an omen or a sign of some ordinarily invisible power, the symptom of the gods – the unknowable – pressing into the world we know. (The word *monstro* means "to show," and the same root appears in the word "demonstrate.") But the monster was also a warning, foretelling death, madness, and disaster.

And so it is in your campaign. As the visible aspect of the unnatural, the supernatural, the uncanny, or the Just Plain Not Right, the monster – in whatever form it takes, or refrains from taking – lies at the heart of the horror game.

Come now,
my child
if we were planning
to harm you, do you think
we'd be lurking here
beside the path
in the very dark-
est part of
the forest?

– Kenneth Patchen,
But Even So

Choosing Your Monster

Selecting the right monster – or set of monsters – is thus a crucial part of designing a horror scenario or campaign. Gearing the monster's power level to the heroes, and its powers to their skills and abilities, comes at the *end* of the process, after you've decided which monster to throw at the intrepid investigators. Ensuring that the monster fits your setting comes first. Monsters don't just appear out of nowhere, even if they *seem* to do just that!

If the Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know has to be summoned, then who summoned it? Why? How long ago?

If vampires in the setting come only from infection, then who infected *this* vampire? Did he do it on purpose?

If you're running an Old West campaign, what's a mummy doing here at all? Is it a museum specimen, stolen from New Orleans? The main attraction of some traveling sideshow? An Anasazi mummy, created by long-forgotten shamanic magic to guard the pueblo from intruders?

And so on.

Stereotypes and Archetypes

The *stereotyped* monster can be fatal to a horror campaign. The aura of uncertainty so central to horror is lost when the party meets nothing more interesting than the same creatures the players have seen in countless horror films. For instance, the stereotyped vampire – be he Lugosi or Lestat – is boring indeed. Stake his heart and get on with the game.

Still, if something has been done over and over again, then there must be something important in it regardless of all the trite movies, books, radio shows, and comic books. The symbolism – the *archetype* – is always there in the "popular" monsters. If a particular story, character, or creature survives terrible treatment, then that's because something about it *matters* to a lot of people. The challenge when running a horror campaign is to find the jewel in the heart of each "stock" element, and to riff on it, to change it up. At best, to build around it a new shape – something that no one has ever seen before, something that the players will never forget.

To interpret a "classic" monster, think about the characteristics that the different versions of the creature share, or those that are most important in the stories. But don't stop there: Think about *why* these characteristics, and not others, are important. What do they symbolize? What fears – and what desires – does the monster represent?

For instance, what's vampirism *really* about? Is it about wearing a black cloak and speaking with an accent? Probably not. Is it about turning into a bat and flying at night? That's fun, but still not central. Is it about living forever at the cost of isolation from humanity? Ah . . . *now,* we're getting somewhere! But it can also be about the danger and romance of being a predator on mankind. And, in most modern versions, it's definitely about sex.

Books about the classic horror monsters are common; they can help tremendously. Knowing what such a creature is about gives players and GMs a consistent mood and framework for the campaign. Finally, remember that supernatural entities, like people, have histories and motives. They should appear for *reasons.* The supernatural should never be commonplace enough to support a random "wandering monster" approach, or it will rapidly lose its interest. Of course, "The PC is acting like an idiot and deserves to have a monster jump on him!" can be a perfectly valid reason.

Thoroughly Modern Monstrosity

Many supernatural legends have their origins in preindustrial periods, and have never been properly "updated" to allow for modern technology. For example, vampires cast no reflection in a mirror – but what about cameras or X-rays? The best way to deal with such questions is to define the legend (and the game reality) as accurately as possible. Work from first principles.

In the above example, the GM should ask himself *why* vampires don't cast reflections. Some legends assert that it's because the vampire has no soul, which is what the mirror reflects. If so, then all reflective or image-capturing devices become useless; vampires certainly won't show up on video surveillance cameras, and a telephone might not even pick up a vampire's voice! Conceivably, vampires' names might not be recordable on computer databases – that would certainly explain why they wind up hanging around derelict warehouses. Others traditions specify that the mirror in question is silver-coated and point out that silver is harmful to vampires. In that case, only silver-coated or -backed reflective surfaces are ineffective; while some cameras use silvered film and mirrors, digital cameras and X-ray machines don't.

Incorporeal beings such as ghosts pose different problems. Sometimes, ghosts are manifest – but can they be photographed? Generally, yes, since a photograph (or video image) is a recording of rays of light, and it could be said that a ghostly manifestation is one of light. The GM may wish to redefine the concept of ghosts to prevent photographic recordings, however; perhaps their manifestations are merely *psychic* illusions that only the mind can perceive. Some ghosts might even use magic to render cameras useless. Of course, modern-day PCs who hope to use photographs of ghosts as proof face another challenge: convincing the authorities that such photos aren't hoaxes in this age of Photoshop.

If you're moving a monster out of its "native" habitat, then a little thought about what you're moving, and why, can pay big dividends of game realism – and hence, of horror.

Monsters as Fears

With the above in mind, the remainder of this chapter is organized into sections that address some basic human fears. Each fear has a "signature" monster, some variations, and game notes attached to it. The monster given for a particular fear is a starting point; this organization is descriptive, *not* prescriptive. If you decide that vampires are fundamentally not about the fear of taint and disease, but rather the fear of the unloved dead, then revamp (ahem) your bloodsucker accordingly. Some creatures – and fears – have pointers and advice for such adjustments. Add new monsters for specific fears, and recombine monster templates with Frankensteinian abandon. The goal here is to help the GM think about monsters in terms of their role as thematic elements first and foremost, as portents of the uncanny, rather than as opponents.

Bullets Can't Stop It!

"God made man. Sam Colt made men equal." By the numbers, Sam Colt (or perhaps Richard Gatling) may even have made man equal to monsters. Daikaiju and Ancient Ones aside, few critters can withstand a hail of well-directed lead for long. So how can the GM un-level the playing field again?

No Guns: Set the story in a place, time, or situation where there would be no guns; e.g., medieval France, a remote island after a plane crash, or an insane asylum.

No Gunmen: The PCs don't carry guns; e.g., kids at summer camp, Buddhist monks, or maximum-security prisoners.

Lousy Gunmen: The PCs have guns but can't hit the broad side of the barn; e.g., most people in a zombie apocalypse, CIA "desk jockeys," or overconfident street thugs.

No Reloads: The PCs are trained but must conserve ammo; e.g., soldiers behind enemy lines, a police sniper during that zombie apocalypse, or hunters backpacking in the Canadian wilds.

An Inconvenient Shoot: The monsters lurk where guns' effectiveness is diminished; e.g., total darkness, underwater, twisty tunnels, or dreams. Consider Morlocks, Deep Ones, or Freddy Krueger.

Smart Monsters: The monsters are intelligent or cunning enough to take away guns or ammo; e.g., a werewolf who dislikes taking a silver risk, a ripper who lives to terrorize his prey, or Roy Batty in *Blade Runner.*

Sneaky Monsters: The monsters are too stealthy and/or fast to engage effectively before they enter close combat to attack; e.g., man-eating lions, invisible madmen, or the xenomorphs in *Aliens*.

Charming Monsters: The monsters use mind control (or pure terror!) to make victims pause when they should shoot; e.g., a vampire who can mesmerize you to drop the gun, impossibly beautiful faeries, or little kid zombies you don't *want* to shoot.

No Safe Target: The monsters lurk where one shouldn't discharge a firearm; e.g., any monster hiding in plain sight in a crowd, a monster on a pressurized jet or submarine, or the xenomorph nest under the heat exchanger in *Aliens*.

No Good Target: The monster's organs aren't where they should be, requiring a roll against an obscure Physiology specialty to target its vitals, or the creature has No Vitals (p. B61); e.g., alien invaders, golems, or revenants.

No Target At All: The monster can't be dealt with by shooting; e.g., Hill House, the Colour Out of Space, or a tiny grub that parasitizes people and makes them act erratically.

Won't Stay Shot: The monster gets back up shortly after being shot (although shooting buys the victims some time, because the monster must recover before striking again); e.g., vampires, Michael Myers in *Halloween,* or tulpas.

Ghosts aside, relatively few monsters are simply bulletproof. In fact, most go down just fine against a skilled shooter with a good gun and ammo, set up where he can't be flanked, covering an evacuated kill zone, and warded against dirty tricks. The trick is setting that up . . . and the GM's trick is to make it impossible.

Fear of Taint

This fear is not precisely that of disease (pp. 86-87) or of the unnatural (pp. 77-82) per se, but something between the two. Corruption, decay, unwholesomeness . . . any rot that spreads is a taint. Before germ theory, disease might well have been considered a taint; to the Victorians and their ancestors, madness was a taint passed down through corrupt blood. Fear of tainted blood, writ large and pathologically, becomes the fear of not only disease, but of foreigners, illicit mating, and death. Where all of these fears overlap lies the vampire.

The Vampire

A vampire is a powerful undead creature that sustains its existence by feeding off the energy of the living. It's perhaps the most widely recognized supernatural monster. Vampire legends are common in almost every culture from every time period – a word meaning "vampire" can be found in most languages, modern and historical. The English word probably comes from a Slavic root word, *obyr,* specifically via the Bulgarian *vapir.*

Our mythic vampire also seems to have emerged from the Slavic Balkans. The vapir was just one of many walking-dead legends intimately involved with religious warfare in that region between the Orthodox Church and the Bogomil heresies – in part over the notion of proper burial. According to some scholars, the Balkan vampire legend arose from concerns that the new burial practices were somehow heretical, which is to say tainted (by sin), and therefore ineffective. This concern, fertilized with traditional nature-demons (such as the *vrykolakas* of Greece, which more closely resembles our modern werewolf), widespread fears of disease and plague, and other pagan ancestor and burial spirits, became the vampire: a pale, hairy, walking corpse that drinks the blood of the living.

Interestingly, the next stage in the legend's evolution also came during a time of religious turmoil in the Balkans, as Catholic Austria expanded its influence into Orthodox Serbia and Transylvania. "Vampire panics" began to sweep the Balkans and Eastern Europe, throwing villages into hysteria over reports of gore-bloated walking dead. From 1650 to 1750, cheap, sensationalistic pamphlets carried word of the vampire plague to Germany and Britain, where the vampire entered the Gothic shudder-tale tradition and merged with the dark, tormented Gothic antihero (see *Gothic Horror,* p. 125).

The modern image of the vampire owes much to 19th-century English literature. The glamorous European noble represented everything that the Victorian Englishman disdained: dark secrecy, sexual power, and the old order versus the new individualism. The poets Byron, Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley were fascinated by vampirism, and referred to it often in their works. Byron's physician, Dr. John Polidori, created the aristocratic vampire with "The Vampyre," published in 1819. Bram Stoker perfected the model with *Dracula* in 1897. He added a selection of actual Transylvanian folklore, dramatic effect, and Gothic standbys to the vampire story. Stoker's black-caped stalker of the night, sleeping in his coffin by day and impelled by murderous deviant sexuality, was the forerunner of the 20th century's film vampires. Anne Rice's 1976 *Interview with the Vampire* further divorced vampires from unglamorous, grubby peasantry – and from medieval traditions of crosses and garlic – while emphasizing the vampire as romantic outsider and sexual ideal.

The numerous legends and myths concerning vampires exceed the scope of this book. The GM is strongly encouraged to invent vampire legends unique to his campaign. Decide what the vampire represents: What does society regard as *tainted* – as evil, dangerous, or antisocial? Draw from this concept to determine the creature's powers and weaknesses. Defining exactly what the vampire is makes it easier to deal with whatever actions the PCs take against it.

Vlad the Impaler

The *voivode* (governor) of Wallachia from 1456 to 1462, Vlad Ţepeş ("the Impaler") got his nickname from his habit of impaling his enemies on wooden stakes; he likely killed between 40,000 and 100,000 people in this fashion during his turbulent reign. A tireless warrior against the Turks, Vlad was eventually defeated by his brother Radu and fled to imprisonment in Hungary. He left Hungary in 1475, and died the next year trying to regain his throne. His grave has not been authoritatively identified to this day.

Vlad's father was Vlad Dracul ("the Dragon"), and during his lifetime, Vlad was also known as Dracula ("Son of the Dragon"). Bram Stoker borrowed the name and career of the historic prince of Wallachia for his vampiric Count Dracula – although his vampire was Hungarian, not Romanian. Later authors identified Stoker's vampire with Vlad himself.

Vlad remains a kind of national hero in Romania, but his murderous habits effectively blackened his name in Hungary and Germany. Lurid, moralistic narratives of his bloody reign and ignominious death appeared for centuries after the Turks absorbed Vlad's Wallachian homeland. Vlad makes an absolutely wonderful main villain for any vampire game, but it might be fun to make him a *hero* – one Romanian epic poem tells of Vlad's battles against the evil undead, including vampires!

Vampire

150 points

The basic vampire on p. B262 reflects a consensus modern, Western notion of vampires, as defined by folklore, literature, and cinema.

Variations

All of the capabilities and shortcomings of vampires should be considered *optional.* The GM is free to ignore or modify them to suit his campaign. One technique, also used in the film *Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter,* is to assume that there are many different kinds of vampires. Vampire hunters won't automatically know their prey's weaknesses; they'll have to discover these by investigating specific cases.

The most common alterations involve the Draining and Uncontrollable Appetite disadvantages. Changing Draining to Restricted Diet (Human Blood, Substitution -50%) [-10] yields a more traditional vampire for the same point cost; "blood as fatal addiction" is a creation of 1970s drug-culture artists, not of Balkan myth-makers. Adding Reduced Consumption and Metabolism Control creates a vampire who can hibernate in his coffin for centuries. Blood isn't the only option for Draining or Uncontrollable Appetite, either; the search for life force causes some varieties of vampire to feed on sex, beauty, youth, will, psychic power, or even spinal fluid!

Pre-Christian and post-Anne Rice vampires often have no Dread of religious symbols. Others have a specific Dread of such symbols wielded by individuals who possess True Faith. And some vampires Dread things other than (or in addition to) garlic, religious symbols, and running water; e.g., wild roses, hawthorn, iron filings, brooms, mirrors, and (of course) fire.

Many vampires suffer from strange compulsions such as "Must count small objects (like seeds) whenever encountered" or "Must untie any knots encountered"; this counts as Compulsive Behavior (6) [-10]. Other possible disadvantages, some added to vampire lore from other undead in folktales or fiction over the years, include Frightens Animals [-10], Nocturnal [-20], and Vulnerability. For Vulnerability's purposes, any of cutting, impaling, wood, or metal would be "Common"; any of cutting metal, cutting to neck, impaling wood, or impaling to heart would be "Occasional"; and either of cutting metal to neck or impaling wood to heart would be "Rare." Thus, the cinematic "stake through the heart and a cloud of dust" is Vulnerability (Impaling Wood to Heart ×4) [-20]. Anne Rice's vampires have combustible blood – as might a science-fictional vampire with hyper-oxygenated blood powering its abilities – and hence Vulnerability (Fire ×3) [-45]!

Some vampires can summon or command animals: rats, wolves, bats, etc. Handle this as, for example, two groups of Allies (a rat swarm and a wolf pack) with Summonable – or perhaps as Mind Control (Specialized, Rats and Wolves Only, -35%). Other vampires (mostly in fiction and film) can cloud the minds of mortals; depending on the vampire, this might be Mind Control once again (with or without limitations), Enthrallment skills (pp. B191-192), or some other trait. Further, related capabilities are possible; Stoker's Dracula possesses some degree of Clairsentience or Special Rapport, but only with those who've tasted his blood.

In both cinema and folklore, vampires often regenerate unless buried in a specific fashion: at a crossroads, with the head cut off and stuffed with garlic, and a stake through the heart. This was the traditional burial method for suicides in Europe (practiced in Britain as late as the 19th century) – and in early Balkan folklore, some vampires *were* the walking corpses of improperly buried suicides. Burning the vampire and scattering its ashes in running water often works, too. Model such conditions by adding Hindrance limitations to Unkillable; the "suicides' reward" is "Rare" (-5%), while the running water trick is "Occasional" (-15%).

> *As the Count leaned over me*
> *and his hands touched me,*
> *I could not repress a shudder.*
> *It may have been that his breath*
> *was rank, but a horrible feeling*
> *of nausea came over me,*
> *which, do what I would,*
> *I could not conceal.*
>
> *– Bram Stoker,* ***Dracula***

The "romantic vampire" appears on pp. 65-66; the *nosferatu,* or plague vampire, on p. 87; the Japanese *gaki,* on p. 72; and the Mexican *cihuateteo,* on p. 93. Further variations on the basic vampire template include:

Jiangshi: The "stiff corpse" of Chinese legend moves by hopping; it's vulnerable only to fire or lightning. It may eventually buy off its reduced Move with earned points, and add Super Jump or even Flight! Some jiangshi are Hideous. *Stats:* Vampire [150]; add ST+4 [40], Basic Move-1 [-5], Claws (Talons) [8], Compulsive Behavior (6) (Count small objects) [-10], Detect (Breath) [10], Dread (Consecrated Incense) [-5], Dread (Peach Wood) [-5], Nocturnal [-20], Social Stigma (Monster) [-15], Unnatural Features (Greenish-white hair; Long fingernails) [-2], and Weakness (Salt; 1d/minute) [-20]; remove Divine Curse, Dominance, Dread (Religious Symbols), Insubstantiality, Speak With Animals, and Supernatural Features (No Reflection); and change Alternate Forms to (Bird, Wolf) and Achilles' Heel to Fire and Lightning. *58 points.*

Moroi: This Romanian vampire is a spirit that emerges from a corpse at night; a similar belief was common in 19th-century New England. When not materialized, it looks like a cloud of glowing dust mites. *Stats:* Vampire [150]; add Infectious Attack [-5] and Nocturnal [-20]; remove ST bonus, Alternate Forms, Divine Curse, Dominance, Dreads, Speak With Animals, and Weakness; remove limitation from Unkillable; and change Dependency to (Own non-decapitated corpse) and Insubstantiality limitation to Difficult Materialization. *161 points.*

Psychic Vampire: Common in Theosophical tradition, this is a human whose astral body drains the life from other people. *Stats:* Draining (Sentient life energy) [-5]; Leech 1 (Malediction 1, +100%; Ranged, +40%; Psionic -10%) [58]; and Lifebane [-10]. *43 points.*

Upurina: This Serbian revenant corpse is one of many Balkan "old-school" vampires, all stinking, bloody horror.

Stats: Vampire [150]; add Bad Smell [-10], Frightens Animals [-10], Ham-Fisted 1 [-5], Infectious Attack (Accessibility, Fatal attacks only, -20%) [-4], Lecherousness (12) [-15], Sadism (12) [-15], Social Stigma (Dead) [-20], and Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-10]; remove Alternate Forms, Dominance, Draining, Insubstantiality, Speak With Animals, Sterile, Uncontrollable Appetite, and Weakness; and change Achilles' Heel to Fire, Dependency to (Human Blood; Illegal; Monthly) [-15], and Night Vision to a 0-point feature (p. 17). *54 points.*

Vampire Lord: This is a more powerful "Stoker-style" Western vampire – consider it a "greatest hits" collection of vampire abilities. *Stats:* Vampire [150]; add ST+4 [40], DX+2 [40], Basic Speed+3 [60], Allies (Rat swarm; Built on 25%; 12 or less; Summonable, +100%) [24], Clairsentience (Accessibility, Only at night, -20%; Accessibility, Only through those who have tasted his blood, -40%; Increased Range 17, +170%) [105], Claws (Sharp) [5], Clinging [20], Dark Vision [25], Discriminatory Smell [15], Fatigue Attack 1d (Accessibility, Only on sleeping targets, -20%; Malediction 3, +200%; Missed Sleep, +50%) [33], Leech 3 (Addictive Bite, +200%; Blood Agent, -40%; Heals FP, +60%) [106], Magery 1 [15], Mind Control (Hearing- *or* Vision-Based, -15%) [43], Mind Reading (Accessibility, Only on those who have tasted his blood, -40%) [18], Mindlink (2-9 ghouls, lesser vampires, and victims) [10], Regeneration (Very Fast; Accessibility, Only at night, -20%) [80], Restricted Diet (Human Blood; Substitution, Animal Blood, Retching, -50%) [-10], Silence 4 [20], Supernatural Durability (Killed by fire) [150], Teeth (Sharp) [1], Telesend [30], Vulnerability (Beheading Attacks ×2) [-10], Vulnerability (Impaling Wood to Heart ×2) [-10], and Wealthy [20]; remove HP bonus, Draining, Night Vision, Unhealing, Unkillable, and Vampiric Bite; add Accessibility, Only at night, -20% to both Alternate Forms and Insubstantiality; change Weakness to (Holy Water; 1d/minute) [-20]; and buy Neck Bite (p. 30) up to Brawling-2 [4]. *939 points.*

Vetala: This spirit from Hindu mythology must possess a corpse to feed. Vetalas (also called *baitals*) know much that is hidden, and are sought after by sorcerers. *Stats:* Haunt (p. 27) [251]; add HP+4 [8], Acute Hearing 4 [8], Clinging [20], Compulsive Behavior (12) (Answer riddles) [-10], Dependency (Human Blood; Illegal; Monthly) [-15], Dread (Religious Symbols; 5 yards) [-14], Magery 1 [15], Mind Control (Hearing-Based, -20%; Puppet, -40%) [20], Nocturnal [-20], Possession (Accessibility, Bats or corpses only, -20%; Spiritual, -20%) [60], Scanning Sense (Sonar) [20], Speak With Animals (Specialized, Bats, -80%) [5], Telekinesis 15 (Accessibility, Corpses only, -20%; Animation, -30%) [38], Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Blood) [-15], and Vampiric Bite [30]. *401 points.*

The Ghoul

Often closely associated with the vampire, the *ghoul,* too, operates across a broad spectrum of interrelated fears. The ghoul in the vampire legend is a mortal who subjects himself to the vampire in order to be granted life, blood, or some other mysterious boon. The madman Renfield from *Dracula* is the classic example, but most fictional and cinematic vampires have some kind of companion figure who serves them in daylight and somehow partakes of, even desires, their taint. Simply adding Uncontrollable Appetite (Blood) and Duty (To the vampire) to any mortal yields such a ghoul – although many also possess Slave Mentality and any number of Delusions and Odious Personal Habits. In some versions of the story, the vampire may grant the ghoul some kind of power, usually either minor hypnotism or uncanny strength.

Technically, however, a ghoul is a corpse-eating monster – frequently associated with graveyards – derived from Arabian legends. The word *ghul* (pl. *ghilan*) comes from the Arabic *ghala,* "to seize," as with paralyzing fear (as Burton theorized) or simply with the supernaturally strong arms of the ghilan. As Arab culture urbanized, ghilan changed from cannibalistic ogres lurking by the side of the road to beings more often associated with burial grounds and the unwholesome dead (corpses are ritually unclean in Islam). They garbed themselves in funerary finery, mocked the living, and prowled beneath the city in search of corpses (in this respect, they resemble the Unseelie; see pp. 82-84). Ghouls took on some of the characteristics of the plague dogs that dug up corpses in India and elsewhere in the East, sometimes sporting a bizarrely canine-human appearance. William Beckford introduced them to Western audiences in his novel *Vathek,* and H.P. Lovecraft further elaborated on their lore in "Pickman's Model" and his Dreamlands stories.

Poisoning Phobias

Fear of poisoning goes back almost as far as the vampire legend itself – in fact, "vampire," "poisoner," and "witch" are the same word in many languages. The notion of ordinarily healthy and life-giving food or drink being somehow tainted and deadly has horrified people since the ancient Greek legends of the Harpies. In Italy as recently as the 1820s, "poisoning panics" similar to witch panics spread from town to town, with various hysterical or genuine illnesses being attributed to rings of poisoners, and no one safe from accusation.

This fear's power has led to any number of groups being accused of poisoning wells or fountains, from the early Christians to the medieval Jews to the modern CIA. In the Middle Ages, poisoned wells were thought to have somehow caused the Black Death (another link between fear of taint and fear of disease), just as modern conspiratorial villains must somehow be causing epidemics of cancer, AIDS, or other illness by tampering with the water supply or dosing the air from military jets. Some psychologists even believe that modern diet fads and fears of "Frankenfood" are the 21st-century equivalent of these archetypal poison-panics. You can update these fears and personify them for your game by making your modern vampire the CEO of a chemical company, giving him the ability to draw health from terminal cancer patients, or simply mentioning that his tomatoes remain red and glossy while the state withers under a drought.

Ghoul

100 points

This is a standard "funerary ghoul" from urban Arabian, Persian, or Lovecraftian lore.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+4 [40]; DX+3 [60]; HT+3 [30].
Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 5 [10]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; DR 4 (Limited, Piercing, -40%) [12]; Reduced Consumption 4 (Cast-Iron Stomach, -50%) [4]; Resistant to Disease (+8) [5]; Resistant to Poison (+8) [7]; Silence 1 [5]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 6 [6]; Unaging [15].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bad Smell [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human carrion) [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Necrophilia) [-15]; Restricted Diet (Human Flesh; Substitution, Animal Flesh, Retching, -50%) [-10]; Skinny [-5]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].
Features: Night Vision 5 (p. 17).

> *They are neither man nor woman –*
> *They are neither brute nor human –*
> *They are Ghouls.*
>
> *– Edgar Allan Poe, "The Bells"*

Variations

A ghoul with a less-horrific Appearance (merely Ugly, say) might pass as human. If so, lose Disturbing Voice and change out the Odious Racial Habits and Social Stigma for Secret (Ghoul) [-20]. Such a ghoul might be part of a conspiracy that funnels dead bodies to its members, rather than relying on lax burial procedures in some hellish backwater.

Fantasy Ghoul: From Lovecraft's Dreamlands ghouls came the ghouls of traditional fantasy RPGs, whose paralyzing touch evokes both the paralyzing fear of the vast desert expanses and the fear of corpse-borne disease. *Stats:* Ghoul [100]; add HP+5 [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Double-Jointed [15], High Pain Threshold [10], and Paralyzing Touch 2 (p. 12) [51]; remove Odious Racial Habit (Necrophilia), Reduced Consumption, Restricted Diet, Skinny, and Unaging; lower ST bonus to +2 and Acute Taste and Smell to 2; and change Odious Racial Habit (Eats human carrion) to (Eats sapient beings). *191 points.*

Ghul: The original Arabian version is one of the *djinn* (spirits better known to the West as "genies"), but material in nature rather than composed of "smokeless fire." In Bedouin lore, ghilan lurk beside lonely pathways, luring travelers to their death by starting fires or making noises to distract them from the road. Ghilan can also assume the shape of a friend or a beautiful woman, although they can't change their *feet,* which remain those of an ass. A ghul must be killed in one blow, as a second blow will restore it to life. *Stats:* Ghoul [100]; add HP+3 [6], Doesn't Sleep [20], Gluttony (12) [-5], Immunity to Disease [10], Immunity to Poison [15], Mimicry [10], Morph (Cosmetic, -50%; Nuisance Effect, Always retains ass' feet, -10%; Retains Shape, -20%) [20], Regeneration (Fast; Accessibility, Only after a second blow, -20%) [40], Terrain Adaptation (Sand) [5], and the feature "Can be imprisoned by the Seal of Solomon"; remove Resistant to Disease, Resistant to Poison, and Skinny; remove limitation on DR; lower HT bonus to +2; and change Night Vision to an advantage. *217 points.*

Pishacha: This rotting, leprous, undead cemetery-dweller eats corpses (and children, when it can get them) and serves a rakshasa, a quasi-vampiric demon from Hindu lore. *Stats:* Ghoul [100]; add Per+4 [20], Doesn't Breathe [20], Dread (Neem-Tree Leaves) [-5], Duty (To rakshasa; 15 or less; Involuntary) [-20], High Pain Threshold [10], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25], Leprous Touch 2 (p. 12) [47], No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5], Pestilent (p. 22) [1], and Sexless [-1]; remove DX and HT bonuses, Acute Taste and Smell, Resistant to Disease, Resistant to Poison, Restricted Diet, Silence, and Skinny; add Universal enhancement to Appearance; raise Temperature Tolerance to 10; and lower ST bonus to +2. *99 points.*

Fear of Nature

Nature isn't the kindly mother seen in Disney films. She's famously red in tooth and claw, completely unforgiving, and sadistically clever in finding new ways to kill slow, weak, or unlucky beings. Including man. *Especially* man. With all his vaunted tools, talents, and civilization, man remains at the mercy of Nature, from hurricanes to rat swarms to carnivorous predators.

Man also remains at the mercy of his "animal nature," that portion of humanity which never quite came down from the trees. The "beast within" revels in killing, and drinking rich, foamy blood, and rutting under the stars. Civilized humans fear the attraction of the animal life, just as they fear the danger of the natural world. "Give up your worldly cares," the animal nature calls, "and become one with the predatory, lustful world around you." This is the call of the wild – and the call of the werewolf.

The Werewolf

Werewolves (and other were-beasts) are found in many cultures' myths and legends. Each tradition – along with the movies and books based on it – offers a slightly different story.

One theory holds that were-beast legends originated with hunting magic. Early cave drawings show human hunters wearing deer's skin and antlers (cave paintings rarely depict human forms). Modern tribal hunters are often accompanied by shamans wearing the skin of the animal to be hunted, to form a magical link between predator and prey. The shamans perform rituals that involve them taking on characteristics of the beast. Totemic animals – creatures from which tribes supposedly descend – also contribute to the were-beast myth.

These ancient concepts, combined with modern psychological ideas such as the conflict between primordial beast and civilized man, have helped shape our notion of werewolves.

The shaman's ceremonial wolf skin became a powerful, fearsome, and uncanny concept in the classical world – and later, in the Christian one. Magical wolf skins, rituals performed over wolf skins, eating the flesh of wolves (or people), and similarly primitive and disturbing rites turned the willing into werewolves (or *lycanthropes,* from the Greek words for "wolf-man"). In classical and medieval lore, the werewolf used some sinister ritual to shapeshift from a human being into a large wolf, rather than into a hybrid form.

The werewolf has only one thing on his mind: *killing.* Sometimes he eats part of his kill, but the killing is what's important. Since the average werewolf has already eaten well enough in human form, he isn't ravenous; rather, his lupine nature makes him cruel and hateful. Though not particularly intelligent, the werewolf is cunning enough to avoid large groups, obvious traps, and hunting parties; he prefers to ambush lone victims. Humans – particularly children – are his favorite prey, but he'll settle for livestock, pets, and wild animals in a pinch.

Werewolf

-15 points

This is the traditional medieval and classical werewolf.

Advantages: Alternate Form (Wolf; Skinbound; Breakable, DR 2, Not Repairable, SM -2, -27.5%; Can Be Stolen by Stealth or Trickery, -10%) [37].

Disadvantages: Revulsion (Wolfsbane) [-5]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Werewolf) [-30].

Quirks: Bestial [-1]; Distinctive Features (Eyebrows meet in middle; third and fourth finger of equal lengths) [-1].

The Wolf-Man

Screenwriter Curt Siodmak took the medieval legend of the werewolf as a magical serial killer and transformed it into the tale of a cursed wanderer. His 1941 script for *The Wolf Man* (borrowing in part from 1935's *The Werewolf of London,* which added the full moon and the contagious bite) introduced the silver bullets, the pentagram, and many other familiar elements of the modern werewolf story.

The modern version of the beast isn't a true, four-legged wolf, but a two-legged, hairy-faced wolf-man. The curse victim assumes beast form at the rising of a full moon. The transformation takes 10 seconds (the movies make it seem longer), during which the body sprouts long, fur-like hair; the ears grow pointed; the face elongates, with the teeth becoming more prominent; the hands lengthen and claws appear; and the entire body becomes more muscular. The beast reverts to human form with the setting of the moon or the rising of the sun – whichever comes first.

Were-Forms

Here are a few animal templates for common were-transfers. All assume that the shapeshifter becomes an unnatural, not-quite-bestial version of that creature. None are Hidebound, and whatever the natural animal's IQ, the corresponding form's IQ is only reduced to 6 (assuming an IQ 10 man). Thus, it retains some human self-awareness and reasoning, making it much more dangerous than a natural beast!

Bear

18 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; DX+1 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [12]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+6 [30]; Per+4 [20]; Basic Move+1 [5].

Advantages: Claws (Blunt) [3]; DR 2 [10]; Fur [1]; Not Hidebound [5]; Regeneration (Slow) [10]; Speak With Animals (Specialized, Ursines, -60%) [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2].

Disadvantages: No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Wild Animal [-30].

Cat

40 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST-6 [-60]; DX+4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [48]; IQ-4 [-40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -3; Will+5 [25]; Per+6 [30]; Basic Move+4 [20].

Advantages: Catfall [10]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Enhanced Dodge 1 [15]; Fur [1]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Not Hidebound [5]; Regeneration (Slow) [10]; Silence 2 [10]; Speak With Animals (Specialized, Felines, -60%) [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1].

Disadvantages: Curious (12) [-5]; Domestic Animal [-30]; Quadruped [-35].

Wolf

30 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+5 [25]; Per+8 [40]; Basic Move+3 [15].

Advantages: Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Fur [1]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Not Hidebound [5]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Regeneration (Slow) [10]; Speak With Animals (Specialized, Canines, -60%) [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].

Disadvantages: Quadruped [-35]; Wild Animal [-30].

Wolf-Man (Human Form)

168 points

Advantages: Alternate Form (Wolf-Man) (Accessibility, Only at night during full moon, -40%; Limited Use, Once per night, -40%) [198].

Disadvantages: Secret (Werewolf) [-30].

Becoming a Werewolf

Lycanthropy is usually the result of a family curse laid on (or called up by) a person of great evil. It might be a latent condition that doesn't manifest for several generations, or it could be as common as red hair (often considered a sign of witchcraft or lycanthropy in medieval Europe). Werewolves from a long line of werewolves may even have some lupine abilities – Acute Taste and Smell, Night Vision, etc. – while in human form, albeit at reduced levels.

Other traditional causes include drinking water from a wolf-print and drinking downstream from a wolf.

A popular *modern* concept holds that a person bitten by a lycanthrope will become one. Such werewolves have the Infectious Attack disadvantage (p. B140). If an adventurer is bitten, the GM should make his resistance rolls in secret and let him discover his lycanthropy in play.

A newly infected lycanthrope probably won't know that he has the disease. Even after the transformations begin, the afflicted person has no memory of the event. Traditionally, a werewolf goes to bed on the night of a full moon, only to wake the next morning remembering vague nightmares and feeling tired and sore. Then he turns on the radio to hear accounts of grisly attacks, and wonders what could be behind it all . . .

Stopping a Werewolf

The notion that only silver can harm a werewolf is but one possibility; the GM might not wish to incorporate it into a "realistic" campaign. Some medieval law codes provided that a werewolf must be beheaded with a double-edged sword – perhaps as a parallel to the monster's dual nature. More down-market werewolves could be "cured" by amputating their limbs, or by an exorcism. The method recommended by the Inquisition and other authorities is still the best one, however: Kill the creature in human form, while he's vulnerable to *all* attacks.

There's no reliable cure for lycanthropy. In some movies, killing the werewolf that infected you breaks the curse. In medieval legend, hearing one's baptismal name called three times ends it. For best results, removing a lycanthropic curse should involve a long quest, at great risk; e.g., a search for the night-blooming feng-feng plant of Tibet, which coincidentally acts as a specific against aconite (wolfsbane) poisoning. Someone who learns that he has the affliction – probably from comrades, possibly through deduction – can only hope to control the effects, most obviously by being aware of the moon's phases and by taking precautions such as locking himself in a cage on the appropriate nights.

Wolf-Man (Beast Form)

216 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+8 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [48]; DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+4 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+3 [15]; Basic Move+3 [15].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 3 [6]; Acute Taste and Smell 3 [6]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 15 (Bane, Silver or Wolfsbane, -10%; Can't Wear Armor, -40%; Hardened 2, +40%) [68]; Fur [1]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison (Accessibility, Not vs. wolfsbane, -10%) [14]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Recovery [10]; Regeneration (Very Fast; Bane, Silver or Wolfsbane, -10%) [90]; Silence 1 [5]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 5 [5]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bestial [-10]; Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Cannot Speak [-15]; Dead Broke [-25]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Innumerate [-5]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Non-Iconographic [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats people) [-15]; Revulsion (Wolfsbane) [-5]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

Variations

The human form is intentionally minimalist. Alternate Form might have Emergencies Only, Trigger (Moonlight), Uncontrollable (perhaps with Unconscious Only), other Accessibility limitations ("Only by one side of split personality," "Only while outdoors," etc.), or be a full-on Disadvantageous Alternate Form (p. 18) instead of or as well as the listed modifiers. Other disadvantages suitable for the human form include Frightens Animals (possibly limited to dogs only), Guilt Complex, Loner, Manic-Depressive, and Obsession (Find a cure). In the 1941 film, the lycanthrope could see his next victim's death in the hand or on the forehead of the unfortunate soul. Model this with Precognition (One Event, -40%) and/or a serial Destiny [-10].

The beast form can also vary, generally in the direction of "even more horrifying combat monster." Various film depictions support raising HP, FP, or DR; adding Altered Time Rate, Dark Vision, Enhanced Dodge, Regeneration (Extreme), Super Jump, Teeth (Fangs), Unkillable, or even full-on Supernatural Durability; or being proficient at Neck Snap (p. B232). Additional disadvantages might include actual Vulnerability to silver, along with Berserk, Colorblindness, or Frightens Animals.

Man-Eaters

Many monsters of nature are based in part on man-eating predators. The Persian-Indian monster known as the *manticore* traces its name to the Middle Persian term for "man-eater"; the legend probably evolved from tales of the Bengal tiger.

The *ngojama* (pp. 96-97) and *chemosit* (an arboreal cross between hyena and bear) of Kenya likely sprung from the fear of man-eaters as well. While no large land predator habitually attacks man, a sufficiently old, sick, or desperate beast will do so. And before guns and electric light, man-eating animal attacks were doubtless far more common wherever the ranges of large carnivores pressed up against the cleared fields of human villages.

At sea, it's a different story. Horrific crocodile and shark attacks killed thousands of men as recently as WWII . . .

> *What we are dealing with here is a perfect engine, an eating machine.*
> *– Matt Hooper, in* ***Jaws***

The Man-Eating Lion

The deadliest man-eaters in history appeared in 1898 in Kenya's Tsavo region. Two young, healthy lions began to attack native workers building a bridge over the Tsavo River. Between March and December, the lions killed 135 workers, often tearing them to pieces within earshot of their fellows.

Bridge engineer John Henry Patterson tried to stalk and kill the lions, seemingly without result. The lions attacked in broad daylight, in full view of large groups of men, but vanished into the area's thorn forest before they could be caught or even tracked. They leapt nine-foot fences and pulled natives out of 15-foot trees. They began preying on the hospital, and when Patterson moved the patients out of the hospital and left the old building full of blood as bait, the lions attacked the new hospital while he waited fruitlessly by his trap.

Patterson finally killed the first lion in December. On Christmas week, he fell out of his blind, breaking his leg, when the second lion attacked him. He somehow managed to kill the beast with his last bullet, from six inches away. The skins of the Tsavo man-eaters are still on display at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Some zoologists speculate that the lions of Tsavo (where other lions continued to attack and kill humans for another three generations) became accustomed to human flesh by dining on those left for dead by local slave traders, whose caravans crossed the area. If so, this reiterates the classical theme of Nature as punisher or avenger, adding her own bloody contribution to mankind's sinful miseries. In modern horror tales, Nature is more often specifically avenging humanity's crimes against her – or at least reminding man who's still boss of the planet.

Man-Eating Lion

49 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+6 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -10%) [30]; DX+3 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [36]; IQ-5 [-100]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; HP+3 (Size, -10%) [6]; Will+6 [30]; Per+7 [35]; Basic Move+4 [20].

Advantages: Claws (Sharp) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; DR 1 [5]; Fur [1]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Silence 2 [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].

Disadvantages: Laziness [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Eats people) [-15]; Quadruped [-35]; Wild Animal [-30].

Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Running (A) HT+2 [8]-13; Stealth (A) DX [2]-13.

Variations

This is a smarter-than-average man-eating lion (IQ 5 instead of the usual IQ 4). To recreate one of the Tsavo man-eaters, boost ST and HT by one or two levels (they were *large,* even for lions), improve Stealth, and remove Laziness. For the near-supernatural cunning those beasts displayed, add advantages such as Intuition – and perhaps increase IQ to 6!

The Man-Eating Shark

Possibly the single most evocative man-eater in all horror is the great white shark from *Jaws.* Peter Benchley based his original novel on a series of shark attacks on the Jersey Shore in 1916 (which might have been bull sharks instead), and the movie evokes the shark attacks on the survivors of the *U.S.S. Indianapolis,* torpedoed in 1945. Sharks (most likely oceanic whitetips) killed perhaps a fifth of the 550 men who died while waiting for rescue in the open ocean, and devoured the corpses of those who succumbed to thirst, exposure, and wounds.

Decades of patient advocacy by marine biologists cannot undo the primal fears that Benchley tapped into: The great white shark is a machine designed for killing. And the viewers of Spielberg's film, no less than the Hawaiian worshipers of the shark god Kamohoali'i, know what Nature *really* designed it to kill: us.

Man-Eating Great White Shark

50 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+28 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -30%) [84]; IQ-6 [-120]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +3; Will+6 [30]; Per+6 [30]; Basic Move+2 [10].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Enhanced Dodge 1 [15]; Enhanced Move 1 (Water Speed 14; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%) [18]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Pressure Support 2 [10]; Striker (Snout; Crushing; Cannot Parry, -40%) [3]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1]; Vibration Sense (Water) [10].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper (9) [-15]; Berserk (6) (Trigger, Blood, -20%) [-16]; Ichthyoid [-50]; Odious Personal Habit (Eats people) [-15]; Wild Animal [-30].

Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-12; Survival (Open Ocean) (A) Per+4 [16]-14.

Features: Doesn't Breathe (Gills).

Variations

Like the man-eating lion (above), this shark is smarter than average (IQ 4 rather than IQ 2). And as with the lion, adding advantages such as Intuition can replicate a cunning foe worthy of three sequels.

The Unnatural Natural

If Nature in even small bites is scary, then too much Nature seems downright . . . unnatural. This is the "deep dark woods" of the Grimm fairy tales, the "emerald Hell" and "black lagoon" of Brazilian explorers, the snowy expanse of the *wendigo* (p. 72), and the stark, endless desert that Richard Burton speculated created the tales of the *ghilan* (see *Ghoul,* pp. 59-60). This is also trees or animals or insects behaving weirdly, or aggressively, or both – from Lovecraft's whippoorwills to the plague of worms in *Slither.* In more recent fears, the "unnatural natural" is Nature's response to human invasion, hubris, and pollution.

Swamp Monsters

Nature retains her terror anywhere she wishes (see Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows" for ultimate horror evoked by a pleasant picnic spot), but she's perhaps at her most fecund, primal, and chaotic in the swamp. Where water, soil, plants, and mist blend into an almost impenetrable mystery – there, horror dwells.

From Robert E. Howard to Len Wein to *The Prophecy,* swamp monsters have menaced adventurers and innocents alike. The one described here is a mass of living vegetation – basically humanoid in shape (although it might have Extra Arms, Growth, or Stretching) – that attacks with whipping thorny vines and crushing blows. Other types include the Sasquatch-like "Skunk Ape" (see *Ape-Man,* p. 152) the revived corpse (DC Comics' Solomon Grundy), and versions of the omnipresent serpent-folk (p. 84).

Swamp Monster

399 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 [100]; IQ-5 [-100]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+5 [25]; Per+7 [35].

Advantages: 360° Vision [25]; Affliction 2 (Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Follow-Up, Striker, +0%; Hallucinating, +50%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%) [38]; Ambidexterity [5]; Amphibious [10]; Binding 5 (Vines; Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Environmental, Swamp, -40%; Extended Duration, 3×, +20%; Persistent +40%) [22]; Brachiator [5]; Chameleon 5 (Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%) [15]; Constriction Attack [15]; Danger Sense (Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%) [9]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Double-Jointed [15]; Extra Attack 1 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40]; Plant Empathy [5]; Recovery (Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%) [6]; Reduced Consumption 4 (Food Only, -50%) [4]; Regeneration (Slow; Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%) [6]; Regrowth (Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%) [24]; Speak With Plants [15]; Spines (Short) [1]; Striker (Thorns; Piercing; Armor Divisor, (0.5), -30%; Cannot Parry, -40%; Long, +5 SM, +500%; Weak, -50%) [24]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15]; Unkillable 2 (Accessibility, Only in swamp, -40%; Achilles' Heel, Fire, -50%) [20].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bestial [-10]; Cannot Speak [-15]; Cold-Blooded (50°F) [-5]; Fragile (Combustible) [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Vulnerability (Herbicide ×4) [-20].

Features: Breathes CO_2 instead of O_2; Infravision; Terrain Adaptation (Swamp).

Variations

Swamp monsters might be able to emit mind-controlling spores through their flowers or seedpods (use the Mind Control ability under *Shaggy One,* p. 69); dissolve and reemerge elsewhere in the swamp (Warp with Range Limit and Takes Extra Time); see through flowers or swamp beasts (Clairsentience with Clairvoyance and Increased Range); shoot jets of swamp water (Crushing Attack); or inject targets with deadly vegetable poison (Strong Venom, p. 16). Really creepy ones might drink blood through their rootlets! At the minimum, the latter would have Leech 1 with Malediction and Ranged.

Animal Hordes

From the horde of rats that devoured Bishop Hatto in medieval legend to the angry avians in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds,* too many animals in one place spells horror. The malevolent swarms of direct-to-cable ferocity have by now included everything from dogs to worms to bees to piranha.

A horde is a swarm (p. B461) that occupies multiple hexes on a combat map. Move and damage are as usual for that kind of swarm. However, a horde can attack one person per hex occupied; effectively, it has Extra Attacks. Determine SM from its diameter and then add +2; e.g., a one-hex horde, or swarm, is a yard in diameter and has SM 0 instead of -2. This SM affects Vision rolls to spot the horde but not combat rolls, as a horde hits and is hit automatically. A horde is difficult to disperse – multiply swarm HP by horde diameter in yards to find the total damage needed.

Example: A jilted vampire fills a football stadium with bats. A one-hex bat swarm has SM 0 and Move 8, takes 8 HP to disperse, and inflicts 1d cutting/turn to one victim. This horde is 100 yards in diameter, though! It still has Move 8, but SM is +12, and it does 1d cutting/turn to up to *7,850* targets. It's dispersed after losing 800 HP – by which time the vampire will have absconded with her unrequited quarterback love.

Heroes might also encounter hordes of Unseelie (p. 83), ghouls (p. 59), or zombies (p. 90-92). For hordes of such man-sized foes, see *Zombie Mobs* (p. 91).

Giant Animals

Starting with *King Kong* in 1933, enlarging an ordinary animal to giant size serves up a reliable recipe for horror. Oversize ants, apes, rabbits, lizards, bats, alligators, snakes, tarantulas, and birds – often created by man's foolish technologies of atomic testing or toxic waste – have terrorized B-movie screens since the 1950s, and can still be seen crushing C-list actors in made-for-cable spectaculars. While their associations may be with camp (p. 129), pulp (p. 124), or even silly horror (p. 126), gargantuan animals running amok can be truly scary, as anyone who has seen even one normal-sized rabid cat should be able to imagine. Gigantic beasts can evoke surrealism (p. 123) and even cosmic horror (pp. 124-125), especially if they're bloated or otherwise clearly tainted by Outside forces.

To turn an otherwise normal animal into a giant, pump up SM to the size you want. From this, find the beast's height on the *Size Modifier Table* (p. B19). Then as discussed for Growth (p. B58), increase ST to 5 × final height in *yards*. This helpfully boosts HP and damage to match. The creature covers more ground now, so also double Move for every +3 to SM.

Giant animals are *tough*. They're less vulnerable to poison and seldom seem to tire themselves out chasing the heroine down Broadway; consider adding Fit or Very Fit. To fully replicate the colossi of the movies – which never seem to become monster-burger after the first tank shoots them – add DR (for creatures with natural armor) and/or Hard to Kill; an extra level of either per +1 to SM seems "logical," but feel free to tweak this to suit your idea of the beast's toughness. Rapid Healing may also be helpful.

Since giant animals always become dangerous apex predators, add Combat Reflexes and extra points in Brawling. Remove any traits from the original beast that no longer make sense, but also add any appropriate special attacks; for instance, a creature with hands or a prehensile tail may acquire a Constriction Attack against human-sized targets. Finally, add Terror – because in the movies, merely beholding a giant lemur strikes the citizens of Backlot City with unreasoning fear! Add at least one level of Terror per SM +2; e.g., a monster with SM +6 gets Terror 3, causing Fright Checks at -2.

Fifty-Foot Ape

This is the gorilla from p. B456 turned into a giant (50') ape to show these guidelines in action.

ST: 85	**HP:** 85	**Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12	**Will:** 10	**Move:** 28
IQ: 6	**Per:** 10	**Weight:** 10 tons
HT: 12	**FP:** 12	**SM:** +6
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 6

Grapple (12): Followed by *Neck Snap or Wrench Limb* (p. B404) or Constriction Attack (p. B43) against targets of SM 0 or +1. Reach C-7.

Stomp (10): 9d+2 crushing. Reach C-8.
Swat (12): 9d+1 crushing. Reach C-7.

Traits: Brachiator; Combat Reflexes; Constriction Attack; Fur; Hard to Kill 5; Rapid Healing; Teeth (Sharp); Terror 3; Very Fit; Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-12; Climbing-14.

Fear of Sex

Central to the fear of nature is the fear of sex. During sex, after all, humans are obeying their most primal, animal drives rather than the rationality that civilized cultures tend to exalt. Sex is also messy, involving fluids and skin and other natural things mostly covered up at other times. Finally, sex can create new life, the central key to fertility magic – and to horror literature from the Sumerian epics to *The Children of the Corn*. The explicit fear of sex seems most common in straitlaced societies such as Victorian England and Puritan America. In the Puritan mind, this fear mixed especially strongly with the similar fear of natural "wilderness," which was full of deadly, un-Christian Indians (see *Fear of the Natives,* p. 66).

Vampires, Again

Such shared puritanism could explain why British and American vampire stories almost always have a sexual component. Their vampires are usually sexually attractive and/or sexually deviant. With the emergence of AIDS, the sexualized vampire once again symbolizes disease, too – just as it did in Bram Stoker's syphilis-plagued Victorian London.

Romantic Vampire

252 points

This is the sexy beast of prudish nightmares (and dreams).

Attribute Modifiers: HT+5 [50].
Advantages: Affliction 3 (Blood Agent, -40%; Ecstasy, +100%; Link, +10%) [51]; Appearance (Beautiful) [12]; Charisma 3 [15]; Leech 1 (Blood Agent, -40%; Heals FP, +60%; Link, +10%) [33]; No Supernatural Features (No Body Heat) [1]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Vampire (p. B262) [150]; Voice [10].
Disadvantages: Lecherousness (12) [-15]; No Vampiric Bite [-30]; Secret (Sexual Deviant) [-10]; Secret (Vampire) [-30].
Quirks: Broad-Minded [-1]; Responsive [-1].
Skills: Acting (A) IQ [2]-10; Erotic Art (A) DX+2 [8]-12; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-15.

Variations

Romantic vampires traditionally pass for human in society, explaining the Secret (and lack of Social Stigma). A Reputation as a great lover – or perhaps as a depraved wanton – is likely. Her Leech ability works through her bite, and might well have Addictive Bite (p. 21) *in addition to* the linked Affliction. The skills are customarily picked up over the centuries, not "racially learned" per se.

Lamia: This is the Romantic lamia described by Keats – not the ancient Greek child-eating, eye-gouging serpent-goddess (see *Lilitu,* pp. 93-94). She grants inspiration to poets in exchange for their life energy. A lamia may also have illusion powers or a (Switchable) venomous bite. *Stats:* Romantic Vampire [252]; add DX+2 [40], Affliction 1 (Advantage, Poet 3, +150%; Blood Agent, -40%; Extended Duration, Permanent, Until next masterpiece, +150%; Link, +10%) [37], Alternate Form (Serpent-Folk, p. 84) [15], Cold-Blooded (50°F) [-5], Magery 1 [15], Mind Control (Vision-Based, -20%) [40], Supernatural Features (Cannot Close Eyes) [-5], Unnatural Features (Serpent Eyes) [-1], and Vulnerability (Beheading Attacks ×2) [-10]; remove Alternate Forms (Bat, Wolf), Dependency, Dominance, and Dread (Running Water); and change Dread (Garlic) to (Moly), Speak With Animals to (Snakes, -60%), and Achilles' Heel to Fire. *408 points.*

Succubi

Succubi (sing. *succubus*) are immaterial beings that materialize to feed on sexual energy. The medieval Church identified them as demons. They reportedly switched from female to male form (in the latter guise, they were called *incubi*), impregnating female victims with their male victims' stolen sperm! The offspring of such a mating might become a half-demon or a ripper (pp. 70-71), or be otherwise tainted.

It's likely that this legend has its origins in "night hag syndrome": the sensation of someone (often perceived as an old woman) sitting on your chest at night, preventing you from breathing. This phenomenon, also known as Awareness During Sleep Paralysis (ADSP), affects 15% of Americans. It might also explain many alien abduction stories. However, for the purposes of a rousing R-rated horror game, ADSP is *caused by* succubi, which have plagued humanity since the days of ancient Greece and Rome. Succubi charm and seduce their victims, and drain their essence through the sex act, often killing them. Some instead enslave a favored victim, granting powerful wishes but constantly draining his life force to the point where he's always on the verge of death.

Succubus

378 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Appearance (Very Beautiful) [16]; Constriction Attack [15]; Dark Vision [25]; Double-Jointed [15]; Hermaphromorph [5]; Leech 2 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Accessibility, Requires sexual intimacy, -25%; Contact Agent, -30%; Steal FP, +50%; Takes Extra Time 10, -100%) [6]; Morph (Cosmetic, -50%; Retains Shape, -20%) [30]; Nightmare 3 (p. 12) [54]; Sleep (p. 12) [47]; Threshold Entity (p. 27) [227]; Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Sexual Energy; Nightly) [-30]; Dread (Religious Symbols) [-10]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Nocturnal [-20]; Selfish (6) [-10]; Social Stigma (Evil Spirit) [-15]; Supernatural Features (No Reflection) [-10].

Quirks: Broad-Minded [-1]; Responsive [-1].

Racial Skill Modifiers: +3 to Erotic Art [6].

Racial Skills: Erotic Art (A) DX+8 [2]-18*; Sex Appeal (A) HT+8 [2]-18†.

Features: Affected by Astral Block, Banish, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit; Can be turned using True Faith.

* Includes +5 for Double-Jointed and +3 for racial skill bonus.

† Includes +6 for Very Beautiful and +2 for Voice.

Fear of the Natives: The Manitou

The *manitou,* derived from American Indian legend, represents the living spirit of a deceased shaman. It returns to the mortal world to redress injustices or crimes committed against the late shaman or his tribe. It's reborn among the living in the form of an animal – usually the shaman's totem (often a wolf, buffalo, bear, or deer) – and stays in that shape until the beast reaches maturity. At that point, the manitou can freely change between animal and human form. If killed in either shape before it has exacted its revenge, it always returns.

A manitou in human form has above-average attributes (12 to 14); skill 15+ in Bow, Knife, Spear, and Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace or Spear); and Alternate Form (Totem Animal). It also possesses magical powers – usually one or two Animal or elemental spells at high skill levels. It wears skins of the animal of its birth, providing it with the beast's DR score.

Manitous most often manifest (in the white man's horror fiction, anyway) when the white man commits crimes against Native Americans. Desecrating burial mounds, violating treaties, etc. attracts the attention of a manitou, should the tribe lose its shaman through such an act. The manitou is reborn as an infant animal, so it's usually several years before the creature strikes. At that point, it savagely attacks white men while in animal form, and then quickly returns to human form before the authorities arrive. Its thirst for revenge cannot be satisfied – only destroying it can stop it.

Other tribal cultures that revere shamans or witch doctors have similar beliefs. This legend could be adapted to almost any location where one civilization has moved in on another. Perhaps Druid "manitous" harass the legions in a Roman horror campaign, or Martian "manitous" haunt British colonists in a steampunk setting!

Fear of Madness

While taint and nature threaten the normal, rational world from without, madness gnaws at it from within. The madman hiding in orderly society – like the mad urges that lurk inside each of us – can never be predicted, bargained with, or prevented.

Historical societies responded to madness as best they could. The Greeks attempted to channel it into sports or, at worst, religious and dramatic catharsis. To Islamic cultures, the mad were touched by God, monsters in the old sense of divine portents and omens – but they were also assiduously avoided, where possible. Proud, rational Georgian and Victorian England spun theories on madness' origin and cure, while exhibiting maniacs to the idle (but oh-so-sane) rich for a shilling a peek. These shifting theories on madness' cause led to changing monsters to personify it, from airy spirits to the spawn of tainted lineages to glassy-eyed deviants to infantile serial slashers.

The Serial Killer

The modern serial killer is usually a sociopath, unable to tell right from wrong in any meaningful way. He was probably abused as a child, although this isn't universal. Odds are good that he began killing animals well before turning to humans. Typically, but not always, he chooses targets he finds sexually attractive, and repeats his methods under similar circumstances. Indeed, only after three separated killings with the same modus operandi do law-enforcement authorities consider the case a serial killing in progress – and this decision can take considerably longer if the victims are social outcasts such as prostitutes or the homeless.

Historians of crime trace serial killers as a phenomenon back to Jack the Ripper (p. 70), although several individual cases, both solved and unsolved, exist in the century or so before his time. Certain pre-modern mass murderers, such as Gilles de Rais, the infamous Bluebeard, and Vlad Ţepeş (see *Vlad the Impaler,* p. 57), might also have been what we would consider serial killers today; however, they were in positions of great political power and influence. In modern times, Idi Amin (dictator of Uganda) and Jean-Bedel Bokassa (of the Central African Republic) equaled the feats and derangement of those murderers, killing without clear political or ideological reason. Finally, some historical "werewolf" cases might actually have been serial killers on the loose – a prefiguring of the serial killer's rebirth as the modern werewolf, showing the human face of sanity to the world while concealing a ravening monster within.

Serial Killer

-53 points

Advantages: Intuition [15]; Serendipity 1 [15].
Disadvantages: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Compulsive Murderer (15) [-7]; Delusion (Major – almost anything!) [-10]; Loner (12) [-5]; Obsession (12) (Next murder) [-10]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Serial Killer) [-30].
Skills: Acting (A) IQ+1 [4]-11.

Variations

This is a character lens rather than a racial template, intentionally made broad enough to cover most known cases of modern serial killers. The whole range of personality disadvantages – from Careful to Odious Personal Habit (Necrophilia) – is also available, with Callous, Chronic Pain (migraines), Clueless, Low Empathy, Phantom Voices, and Trademark being common. Some serial killers (such as Zodiac and the Son of Sam) use guns; *psycho killers* never do.

The Psycho Killer

The psycho killer is the cinematic version of the serial killer, the "slasher" in films such as *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th.* He's the serial killer turned into an archetypal monster. Psycho killers almost always have grotesque sexual dysfunctions, hellish personal stories, and an insatiable appetite for murder. They tend to kill on significant days, such as the anniversary of some past trauma or earlier spate of murders. They also have a tendency to commit widely spaced mass murders or spree killings rather than true serial killings. Unlike serial killers, psycho killers don't retain the same modus operandi, often settling for a simple trademark, such as a hockey mask or a pattern of harassing phone calls.

Psycho Killer

199 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; DX+3 [60]; HT+3 [30].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+2 [4].
Advantages: Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; DR 2 [10]; Extraordinary Luck [30]; Ghostly Movement (p. 20) [30]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40]; Recovery [10]; Weapon Master (Improvised Weapons) [40].
Disadvantages: Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Compulsive Murderer (12) [-15]; Intolerance (Sexually active women) [-5]; Loner (12) [-5]; Low Empathy [-20]; Obsession (12) (Slaughtering teenagers) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Voyeuristic teenager-slaughterer) [-15]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Psycho Killer) [-30].
Quirks: Trademark [-1].
Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-15.

Variations

The modern "psycho killer" motif emerged not only from the werewolf, but also from the career of Jack the Ripper (p. 70) and from legends told around campfires.

"The Hook": This legendary "maniac sex-killer with a hook for a hand" emerged in American folklore in the mid-1950s, possibly inspired by the unsolved 1946 "Moonlight Phantom" murders (which involved a .32) in Texarkana, Texas. *Stats:* Psycho Killer [199]; add Lecherousness (6) [-30], No Weapon Master [-40], and One Hand [-15]; and buy Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-15. *118 points.*

Urban Living Legend: The tale of "The Hook" might be the ritual that keeps him alive! This is "The Hook" as a thought-form, or tulpa (p. 81); he "hibernates" in the astral realm until camping season starts each spring, and then returns to slay. As "The Hook" (above), but add Maintenance (Telling the urban legend; 6-10 people; Weekly; Accessibility, Not during winter, -40%) [-12] and Metabolism Control 8 (Hibernation, -60%) [16]. *122 points.*

The Killer Beside Me

The modern successor to the Big Bad Wolf and the Gothic "seducer" borrows from the vampire, the werewolf, and even the demon – all reinterpreted in the modern serial-killer idiom. Vaguely based on H.H. Holmes, Ted Bundy, and other uncharacteristically sociable and charismatic serial killers, the "handsome stranger" can be an antihero (as in *Hannibal*) or even the protagonist (as in *Dexter*).

Handsome Stranger

259 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+1 [2]; Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Ghostly Movement (p. 20) [30]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Recovery [10]; Smooth Operator 2 [30]; Weapon Master (Improvised Weapons) [40]. • 20 points in Appearance [Varies], Charisma [5/level], Honest Face [1], and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Callous [-5]; Compulsive Murderer (12) [-15]; Secret (Serial Killer) [-30]; Trademark [-1].

Quirks: Only kills to punish "bad guys" or to protect himself [-1].

Skills: Acting (A) IQ+4 [8]-16*; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-14.

* Includes +2 from Smooth Operator.

Variations

For an even more seductive handsome stranger, replace Ghostly Movement with a package of modified Enthrallment skills (pp. B191-192) based on Acting instead of Public Speaking.

The Evil Clown

Beyond even the psycho killer as a modern icon of terrifying madness lurks the evil clown. In masterpieces such as Stephen King's novel *It,* and in eye-poppingly bad films such as *Killer Klowns From Outer Space,* the evil clown has staked out his territory as the official emblem of everything that society fears. The image of the clown as messenger of chaos and the uncanny goes back a long way, back even before Punch, the murderous clown-puppet of British lore.

Punch's ancestor, Harlequin – a figure in the 16th-century *commedia dell'arte* – may have come from the medieval painted jester, or Fool, whose "madness" let him speak the truth outside the borders of law and reason. Groups of jesters called *mummers,* who wore painted masks and motley while staging exaggerated combats, appeared in medieval Troyes by the 13th century. According to some scholars, their traditions descended from the cultists of Dionysos, who performed madcap antics at the death of the year in ancient Greece.

The mummers – and their British counterparts, the Hognels – were often accused of harboring witches and conspirators in their ranks. The template below assumes something even worse: that within such nomadic bands of clowns lurk inhuman (or mutant) beings known as "palefaces" or "chalkies," who worship the bizarre, mad god Komus (most likely a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know) and seek ecstasy in insanity. Palefaces have thick, almost rubbery, white skin, and no body hair. Their main ability is that of emanating certain pheromones. Some of these trigger irrational fear, and potentially flashbacks and hallucinations, in normal humans; others make them seem harmless, pleasant, and innocent.

To normal *adult* humans, that is. Human olfactory organs change radically at puberty; children are immune to the paleface's literal "odor of sanctity." Setting aside their ability to sense chalkies, children have much to fear from these monsters. The reason for this lies not merely in these beings' strange madness-worship, but also in the fact that palefaces are unable to sire children among themselves – they need a human partner for that. A human partner who has gone utterly mad *before* leaving puberty. Thus, chalkies are always on the lookout for children to frighten and torment.

Evil Clown

275 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+1 [20]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Dark Vision [25]; Discriminatory Smell (Emotion Sense, +50%) [23]; Double-Jointed [15]; DR 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [6]; Longevity [2]; Mimicry [10]; Mind Control (Accessibility, Adults Only, -20%; Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Emanation, -20%; Emotion Control, -50%; Scent-Based, -20%) [20]; Penetrating Voice (Laughter) [1]; Rapier Wit [5]; Recovery [10]; Smooth Operator 2 [30]; Terror 6 (Scent; -5 to Fright Checks) [80].

Disadvantages: Berserk (12) [-10]; Bully (12) [-10]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Intolerance (Prepubescent children – especially quiet, intelligent, and creative ones) [-5]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Inhuman monster that delights in tormenting and murdering children) [-30]; Unnatural Features 5 (Chalk-white skin) [-5].

Quirks: Compelled to work a "day job" as a clown or a mime, preferably in a circus [-1]; Cruel, raw sense of humor [-1]; Dislikes cuddly toys, such as teddy bears and dolls [-1].

Racial Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX [4]-12; Disguise (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Performance (A) IQ [2]-11; Psychology (H) IQ+1 [8]-12*; Sleight of Hand (H) DX+1 [8]-13.

* Add +3 for Discriminatory Smell within 2 yards of subject.

Variations

An even more seductively evil clown might possess illusion powers or spells (see ***GURPS Powers*** or ***GURPS Magic***) to lure children into its grasp. Paleface high priests have Gaudivore (p. 12), Power Investiture, and further spells yet.

Mad Nature: The Shaggy Ones

Especially in preindustrial societies – for whom flukes of the weather or wildlife were frequently life-or-death matters – nature embodied uncontrollable, wayward chance, killing or saving at its whim. The classical Greeks in particular saw wild nature as a mad, energetic force to be placated and feared. They explicitly contrasted the "Panic" (named for Pan, god of nature . . . and of terror) of the wild with the Apollonian calm of reason and logic. For them, nature spirits were capricious beings that might help or attack you for no reason – creatures of pure natural emotion, impulse, and madness.

Pan's prime servitors were the *satyrs,* goat-like creatures embodying all base lusts – for food, for wine, and for sex. The peoples of the ancient Middle East knew of similar beings, the *se'irim,* or "shaggy ones." In later art and poetry, satyrs became "domesticated" out of their true horror, their insatiable greed and lechery tamed to mere stereotyped quirks. But in earlier, less "civilized" times, the poor farmers of the Mediterranean hill country knew that the shaggy ones were malevolent, crazed entities who could only be placated with worship and sex. Perhaps the tendency of modern movie serial killers to stalk couples having sex in remote wilderness locations is a remnant of the shaggy ones' murderous erotomania. (Playing up the sexual angle and the wilderness element can tune the satyrs to fear-of-nature themes.)

Both satyrs and se'irim resemble goats that walk upright. Their faces are parodic combinations of goat and man, leering and drooling with their lusts, or twisted in inhuman laughter. They can strike with horn and hoof, but their madness is their true weapon.

Shaggy One

141 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST-3 [-30]; DX+3 [60]; HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10].
Advantages: Animal Empathy [5]; Claws (Hooves) [3]; Fur [1]; Musical Ability 2 [10]; Night Vision 4 [4]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Striker (Horns; Crushing; Cannot Parry, -40%; Limited Arc, -40%) [1]; Terror 8 (Sound; -7 to Fright Checks) [100].
Disadvantages: Alcoholism [-15]; Chummy [-5]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Lecherousness (12) [-15].
Racial Skills: Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; Musical Instrument (Panpipes) (H) IQ [4]-12.*

* Includes +2 from Musical Ability.

Variations

Some shaggy ones seem to possess pheromone-based Mind Control (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Emanation, -20%; Emotion Control, -50%; Scent-Based, -20%) [30].

Fear of Mutilation

There's something nastily specific about mutilation that gives it a unique frisson. In a way, this fear is an internalization of the fear of the grotesque or the freakish – what if *we* were like that? (That fear also powers that of blasted heaths and twisted trees, used by horrorists from Shakespeare to Lovecraft.) We fear the mutilation of our bodies, such as the famous "injury to the eye" condemned by the Comics Code Authority as unsuitable for children's entertainment. That fear might be entirely our own creation or it may latch onto something external.

Mutilation Panics

Among the many kinds of mass hysteria to which mankind is prone (see also *Poisoning Phobias,* p. 59), one of the most peculiar is the mutilation panic. Usually emerging in times (or places) of social stress or dislocation, the mutilation panic causes normal people to be certain that some unknown fiend wielding a knife or claws has attacked them. Everyone knows someone who knows someone who was assaulted; some people swear they saw murder being done.

Such panics erupted in London over a period of about 100 years, from the "London Monster" of the 1780s, who reportedly slashed young women with a knife and then vanished, to "Spring-Heeled Jack" of the Victorian era, who attacked young women with flame breath and "metallic claws" before bounding away as if he had springs on his heels. Rapidly urbanizing societies in Africa and Southeast Asia have periodic epidemics of "penis thieves," who somehow mutilate strange men on the street without being seen.

Many cities in India have their own high-jumping "monkey man" attacker. Reading about such incidents may amuse us, far away – until it starts happening in our own city.

The Ripper

Elements common to all mysterious mutilators include a deliberate attempt to spread panic, slashing attacks, and rapid retreats. Some mutilators have exaggeratedly animal or mechanical features, but since all seem able to vanish into a crowd, that isn't necessarily a requirement. One possible explanation posits a lineage descended from a particularly active succubus (p. 66) in 17th-century England. Within this interlinked set of families, demon blood occasionally surfaces, creating a ripper: A (usually) younger son plunges headlong into ever-wilder pursuits, seeking increasingly debauched stimulation, until suddenly – in a moment of sadistic glory typically involving the torture or abuse of some terrified underling or prostitute – his ripper heritage becomes apparent.

Rippers aren't gregarious, but their naturally competitive instincts occasionally lead them to gather in order to boast about their fell doings, and to egg each other on to further excess with wagers and raillery. Each ripper has a unique style or mark, distinguishable by other rippers and by occult scholars specializing in such things. Some scholars speculate that each style is the inheritance of one particular demon – that is, a ripper in the direct male line of descent from another ripper repeats his ancestor's style precisely. Occasionally, the demonic heritage is so strong in a particularly powerful ripper that he gives up mutilation for serial murder, as may have occurred in 1888 (see *Jack **the** Ripper,* below).

Ripper

337 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+5 [50]; DX+1 [20]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+4 [20]; Basic Speed+3 [60].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Catfall [10]; Claws (Talons) [8]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fearlessness 5 [10]; Flexibility [5]; Ghostly Movement (p. 20) [30]; Hard to Kill 3 [6]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Mind Control [30]; Less Sleep 2 [4]; Recovery [10]; Regeneration (Regular) [25]; Silence 5 [25]; Super Jump 4 [40].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Fear; Weekly) [-40]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Ripper) [-30]; Trademark [-5].

Quirks: Loves to play cat-and-mouse with his victims [-1].

Racial Talent: +3 to Acrobatics, Climbing, Flying Leap, Jumping, Running, and Stealth [15].

Variations

Some rippers may have Terror – all the better to feed their Dependency – or shift between normal human appearance and a monstrous Alternate Form. By compounding the Dependency with Compulsive Murderer, one can create a template for an even more powerful psycho killer (pp. 67-68), or for another species competing for the same niche in the ecology of the subconscious. A ripper with Leech (pp. 20-21) *definitely* needs the Metuovore modifier.

Jack *the* Ripper

Almost synonymous with London's creeping fog and death on a gas-lit street is the name of Jack the Ripper. For three short months in 1888, Jack the Ripper – who signed that name to a letter he sent to a local vigilance committee – terrorized the East End, killing at least five prostitutes in and around the Whitechapel area. Over a century later, he remains the most famous uncaught serial killer in history.

Terrified by and fascinated with his grisly ritualistic killings, the London public (including Queen Victoria) followed Red Jack's exploits in the sensational newspapers. Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and Mary Jane Kelly all died under Jack's knife between August and November of 1888, disemboweled and horribly mutilated.

While there are many theories and suggestions as to Jack's identity, the killer was never apprehended. He seemed to drop out of sight in the city's mists after killing Mary Jane Kelly – although the fiend may indeed have committed later, less-publicized murders, as well as earlier ones often attributed to him.

It's possible that the Ripper had some knowledge of anatomy; he might have been a doctor gone bad. Aleister Crowley hinted that "Saucy Jack" might have had intimate knowledge of occult ritual. Conspiracy theorists postulate that Jack was actually an influential member of the secret society of Freemasons, and that the ritualistic killings were a cover-up for an indiscretion on the part of Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor, a Mason.

Sir Charles Warren, superintendent of Scotland Yard, was a Mason. A large part of the cabinet and Parliament were also Masons. This could explain the Yard's ineptitude in apprehending the killer, as well as the anomaly of Warren's actual destruction of evidence when a chalked message, supposedly from the Ripper, implicated the "Juwes" – not Jews, as Warren claimed, but names from Masonic ritual. (For more on this theory, see Alan Moore's graphic novel *From Hell* or the Sherlock Holmes film *Murder by Decree*.)

Red Jack has also been identified as an Irish terrorist, a mad gynecologist, a ritual butcher, an arsenic-addicted drug fiend, a misogynist poet, Lewis Carroll, Queen Victoria, an alien invader, a vampire, and an astral parasite. Whoever (or whatever) "Old Leather Apron" actually is, he could easily be the focus for any number of encounters with the PCs, who might become his pursuers . . . or his victims.

Spectral Ripper: Rippers might actually be thought-forms or other spirits created by mass social and psychic turmoil. *Stats:* Ripper [337]; add Leech 3 (Heals FP, +60%; Metuovore, +20%; Obligate Metuovore, -50%) [43], Specter (p. 27) [279], and Unhealing (Partial) [-20]; remove Ghostly Movement, Hard to Kill, Less Sleep, Recovery, and Regeneration; and further limit Invisibility with Accessibility, Only while unobserved, -20%. *556 points.*

The Ultimate Mutilation: The Disembodied Brain

The disembodied brain was a staple of 1950s and 1960s B-movie horror. Films centered on such monstrosities (such as *Donovan's Brain* and *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*) invariably involved a mad scientist seeking to preserve either a brain or a severed head after the body's death. Naturally, the brain has a mind of its own, ultimately leading to the scientist's downfall as the repulsive nature of the experiments becomes known to civilization at large.

The GM should decide upon the nature of the brain's life-support system. This might be bubbling chemicals, incandescent energies, or weird bio-matter, customarily held in a clear (but impervious) container attached to a lot of clicking, whirring machinery. Some brains cleverly armor the whole structure, often using robotized manipulators to build it. A brain usually communicates with the outside world via psionics – but weird science may allow for some sort of voice synthesizer, or a neural interface could let the brain jack into computers. A severed head can vocalize like a normal head, given a source of air to pass over the vocal cords.

Adventures involving disembodied brains should play up the shock value of such revolting experiments. Rumors of missing cadavers and unexplained disappearances may lead to the laboratory of a presumed-to-be-innocent college professor, where tanks of formaldehyde house the horrible results of his latest scientific theories.

Disembodied Brain

30 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST 0 [-100]*; IQ+3 [60].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+3 [6]; Will+4 [20]; Basic Move 0 [-25]*.

Advantages: Ally (Brainwashed mad scientist; Built on 50%; 15 or less; Minion, +50%) [9]; Detect (Sentient Minds; ESP, -10%; Precise, +100%) [38]; ESP Talent 4 [20]; Mind Control (No Memory, +10%; Puppet, -40%; Telepathic, -10%) [30]; Mind Probe (Racial, -20%; Telepathic, -10%; Universal, +50%) [24]; Mind Reading (Racial, -20%; Telepathic, -10%; Universal, +50%) [36]; Sealed [15]; Telepathy Talent 4 [20]; Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Racial, -20%; Telepathic, -10%; Universal, +50%) [51].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Increased Life Support (Dedicated brain-support equipment) [-10]; Insomniac (Severe) [-15]; Legless [-30]; Maintenance (Weird Science; 1 person; Daily) [-10]; Megalomania [-10]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Numb [-20].

* Assumes average attributes before disembodiment.

The Creeping Hand

The severed hand of a serial killer (p. 67), evil sorcerer, mad scientist, or other unwholesome sort may well return from the grave – either deliberately or through a chain of unlikely circumstances. Returning hands often have an obsessive desire to take revenge on their body's killer, or occasionally to be sewn onto a living person in order to take control of him (treat this as Contest of Wills between the hand's original owner and its latest host). If the new owner seems obdurate, the hand might wait until he's asleep and then animate his sleeping body for mayhem, leaving him tired but none the wiser. For severed-hand statistics and additional possibilities, see *Independent Body Parts* (p. 15). Any severed hand with grappling skills *will* be adept at the Strangle Hold technique (p. 30).

Variations

These stats assume a brain wired into some combination of speaker, microphone, surveillance system, brazen head, or crystal ball to provide human-equivalent sight, hearing, and speech. One hooked into the Internet might have the digital equivalent of Telecommunication and Clairsentience wherever computers reach! By contrast, a brain dependent solely on psionics for sensation and communication should add Blindness [-50], Deafness [-20], and Mute [-25], for -95 points – and probably additional ESP abilities (p. B256).

Many further traits are possible: *Donovan's Brain* had Possession, as did *The Brain from Planet Arous*. Other brains might possess Leech (like the Psychic Vampire under *Vampire,* p. 58), Psychokinesis (pp. B256-257), or even psionic Afflictions or Innate Attacks. Some brains may turn to the black arts instead, casting spells and summoning demons to serve them. A few lack exotic powers, but their superior intellects still make them dangerous masterminds, plotting strategy for a team of Allies: criminals, vampires, robots, or other low sorts.

Brains are scary things – and not all brain-monsters are surgically removed human organs. Such creatures may be extraterrestrial in origin, or perhaps the result of some strange scientific experiment that mingles brainwaves with extra-cosmic radiation. They might float around on membranous wings, or levitate, and use a dangling, prehensile "spinal cord" (or Telekinesis) to manipulate objects. Design a full racial template for such entities, as you would for any other alien menace. Beings like this often "possess" their victims' bodies, or control their hosts by wrapping prehensile nerves around the spinal cord, allowing them to mingle with human society.

Fear of Starvation

From his earliest beginnings, man has feared hunger. We're evolved to fear it, and it partakes of (or underlies) many of the other fears we feel: It's a disease and a mutilation; it causes death if Nature withholds her favor for too long; and it energizes the fear of taint (rotten food can't be eaten) and the fear of others (here to feed on our sustenance). But perhaps most of all, we fear what madness it will drive us to – a madness that might already be lurking within us.

Hungry Spirits

In classical Japan, medieval France, and the Canadian backwoods, famine bred starvation and murder. It bred other things, too – hungry spirits who use humans to sate their appetites. The Cree, Algonquin tribes such as the Ojibwa, and some of their neighbors know the *wendigo* (from the Cree word for "crazy") as a spirit that possesses a man deep in the woods after he hears its howl on the north wind. It drives him to cannibalism and changes his form to that of a ravening monster.

To cure one possessed by the wendigo without Exorcism, you must pour boiling fat down his throat and melt his icy heart. The extra damage from the Vulnerability is applied to the spirit; the host takes only normal boiling-fat damage. People who have already eaten human flesh are at -5 to resist wendigo possession.

> *For the Panic of the Wilderness had called to him in that far voice . . .*
>
> *– Algernon Blackwood, "The Wendigo"*

Wendigo (Spirit Form)

304 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+5 (Accessibility, Only on possessed human, -40%) [30]; IQ-4 [-80].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+7 [35]; Per+6 [30].

Advantages: Affliction 1 (Accessibility, Only on possessed human, -40%; Disadvantage, Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Flesh), +15%; Extended Duration, Permanent, Ends if possession ends, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%) [33]; Alternate Form (Wendigo Beast; Accessibility, Only while possessing human, -40%; Trigger, Cannibalism, -20%) [6]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; Haunt (p. 27) [251]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Possession (Based on Will, +20%; Hearing-Based, -20%; Preparation Required, 8 hours, -60%; Spiritual, -20%; Temporary Disadvantages, Bad Smell, Supernatural Features (Gaunt, Glowing Eyes, Long Tongue, Malformed Feet), and Vulnerability (Hot Fat ×4), -45%) [20].

Disadvantages: Cannot Speak [-15]; Gluttony (6) [-10]; Loner (6) [-10].

Wendigo (Beast Form)

211 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 [100]; DX+2 [40]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+6 [30].

Advantages: Claws (Talons) [8]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 12) [20]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Reduced Consumption 4 (Food Only, -50%) [4]; Silence 2 [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Super Jump 4 [40]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 6 (Cold) [6]; Terrain Adaptation (Snow) [5]; Terror 8 (Sound; -7 to Fright Checks) [100]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Bad Smell [-10]; Bestial [-10]; Dead Broke [-25]; Gluttony (9) [-7]; Loner (6) [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Kills and eats humans) [-15]; Restricted Diet (Human Flesh) [-20]; Skinny [-5]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Uncontrollable Appetite (9) (Human Flesh) [-22].

Variations

For another take on the wendigo, see ***GURPS Fantasy.*** Some wendigo beasts might have Infectious Attack.

Gaki: The Japanese "hungry spirit" shapeshifts into attractive human or feline forms rather than possessing a target. It isn't invisible, but resembles a ball of smoke or flame. Some devour corpses, while the hunger of others varies – examples include blood, spinal fluid, beauty, music, heat, feces, fragrance, poison, and sex. *Stats:* Specter (p. 27) [279]; add Chronic Pain (Extreme temperature sensitivity; Mild; 8 hours; 9 or less) [-10], Dependency (Common item; Daily) [-30], Draining (Same item as Dependency) [-5], Dread (Shinto holy sites) [-5], Gluttony (6) [-10], Leech 1 (Blood Agent, -40%; Heals FP, +60%) [30], Loner (6) [-10], Morph (Accessibility, Human or feline forms only, -10%; Flawed, No Shadow, -10%) [80], and Night Vision 5 [5]; and remove Invisibility. *284 points.* This assumes one that drains blood, spinal fluid, or sex; others replace Leech with Regeneration (Regular; Trigger, Same item as Dependency, -20%) [20]. *274 points.*

Loup-Garou: This French werewolf is actually a demon that possesses a man, filling him with cannibalistic fury and convincing him that he is a wolf. *Stats:* Wendigo (Spirit Form) [304]; add Bestial [-10], Bloodlust (9) [-15], Dread (Religious Symbols) [-10], and Sadism (9) [-22]; remove Alternate Form, Fearlessness, and Penetrating Voice; and change Possession to Possession (Based on Will, +20%; Spiritual, -20%; Temporary Disadvantages, Delusion ("I'm a wolf"), Revulsion, Wolfsbane, and Supernatural Features (Gaunt, Glowing Eyes, Long Tongue, Malformed Foot), -35%; Terminal Condition, Cock-crow, -10%) [55]. *267 points.* Some scholars split the difference, saying that the Devil cast an illusion of wolf-shape on the loup-garou; model this by adding Alternate Form (Wolf; Cosmetic, -50%) [8]. *275 points.*

Wind-Walker: This is the "cinematic" wendigo, with a touch of August Derleth's Wisconsin occult horror. *Stats:* Wendigo (Beast Form) [211]; add ST+30 (Size, -30%) [210], Cannot Speak [-15], Enhanced Move 1 (Gliding Speed 48) [20], Fatigue Attack 2d (Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Freezing, +20%; Malediction 3, +200%) [84], Flight (Gliding, -50%) [20], Temperature Control 2 (Always On, -20%; Area Effect 1, +50%; Cold, -50%; Emanation, -20%) [6], and Unkillable 2 (Achilles' Heel, Fire, -50%) [50]; remove ST+10 and Super Jump; and change SM to +3. *446 points.*

Witiko: This is the "low-fi" wendigo – a minimalist version based on Cree lore. *Stats:* Wendigo (Spirit Form) [304]; add Terror 5 (Sound; -4 to Fright Checks) [70]; remove Alternate Form; and reduce ST bonus to ST+2 (Accessibility, Only on possessed human, -40%) [12]. *350 points.*

Fear of the Universe

The universe is vaster than we can truly comprehend, no matter how many zeroes we add or telescopes we build. What cannot be comprehended cannot be truly known. It's from the unknown that terrors – the Things From Beyond – come.

Originally, the Things From Beyond lived in the dark forests or mountains where our caveman ancestors wouldn't go at night. As we moved out of the caves, the Things inhabited foreign, dangerous parts: "beyond the Pillars of Hercules," "Darkest Africa," and so on. Now that the world has been explored and nature has been tamed, the Things come from the distant past or future, or outer space, or other dimensions entirely. They're unknowable and mysterious; their victims don't know the Things' weakness, or even if they have one. Worse yet, discovering these secrets *does no good* – the truth will drive you mad with fear. These entities, and their truths, are Things Man Was Not Meant To Know.

Fear of the Foreign

Audiences have habitually viewed "foreign parts" with grave suspicion, and occasionally with outright fear. Outside the Known World is the Unknown, replete with danger and uncertainty. In the ancient and medieval world, when travel was less common, various voyages conjured up their own dangers: fear of crossing the desert was embodied in ghouls (pp. 59-60), fear of sea travel became the sirens (see *Syren,* p. 155), fear of entering the dark woods raised the werewolf (pp. 60-61), etc. As travelling became easier, the fear turned from the journey to those who made it. Foreigners brought horror in their wake: plagues (see *Fear of Disease,* pp. 86-87), social turmoil, and likely demons (pp. 95-96) masquerading as false gods. The alien invader (p. 76) and other Horrors From Outside are the latest incarnations of horrific foreign villains, filling the same role as the scorpion-men of Sumerian legend, the Pharaoh's mummy (pp. 92-93), and Dracula (p. 57).

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know

H.P. Lovecraft didn't invent the "cosmic horror" genre (pp. 124-125) or even the concept of inconceivable alien entities howling and scratching at the borders of the cosmos, but his Cthulhu Mythos set the pattern for almost every subsequent depiction of such Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. This section follows Lovecraft's pattern to enable the GM to create his own unique pantheon of chaotic deities and ancient monstrosities. Such a pantheon can appear in campaigns involving ancient cults, powerful sorcerers, and globe-spanning conspiracies of evil . . . or as the corruption slowly eroding the heart of a single small town in New England.

Creating a Pantheon

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (or simply "Things") fall into three main categories:

Cosmic Deities: Extremely powerful beings inhabiting the far corners of the universe. These aren't always traditional "gods" with magical powers. To Lovecraft, there was no magic, just incomprehensible science practiced in superior dimensions. The dimensions themselves became his Deities: Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, and Nyarlathotep.

Ancient Ones: Monstrous abhorrences that wait in dormancy to unleash their power upon mankind. They may be physically present on Earth, as with Lovecraft's Cthulhu, or trapped in another dimension, as with August Derleth's Cthulhu.

Minions: Alien races (like the Mi-Go) and biologically or magically altered human cultists (like the Deep Ones) who serve the other beings.

Before populating a campaign with Things, the GM must determine the nature of his history and how the Things came into being. In a godless universe of pure chaos, the GM might eliminate the need for Cosmic Deities and simply create races of Ancient Ones. Alternatively, "pure chaos" could manifest in a central Cosmic Deity who radiates entropy to the corners of the cosmos. The GM may also want to pursue a Manichean concept of Order versus Chaos, or Good versus Evil – and perhaps Evil happens to be winning just now.

The GM must then decide the role of Earth and humanity in the general scheme. Usually, humans are insignificant nothings compared to the vastness of Things, and it's often this realization that leads to horror. Then again, humanity may play an important role in the fruition of the Things' plans – perhaps there are items and places of great significance on even a backwater like Earth, left by ancient races.

It's often the Things' human devotees who are charged with obtaining such artifacts and assisting in the manifestation of Deities or the awakening of Ancient Ones.

Finally, the GM should specify the relationship between Cosmic Deities, Ancient Ones, and Minions. Some Ancient Ones and Minions might actively worship Deities, while others aren't aware of the Deities' existence, or pursue their own ends. Minions may only recognize a certain Ancient One as the "one true god," and could even actively work against other Minions. The GM may wish to create a timeline of ancient history for his background, showing how all three types of Things played their role in the affairs of the universe, Earth, and mankind.

Cosmic Deities

Inhabiting the corners of the cosmos, existing simultaneously across time, space, and other dimensions, are the Cosmic Deities. Most are blindly chaotic or extremely evil. They don't concern themselves with mortal affairs unless summoned to Earth by magic or incomprehensible science. When they manifest, they're too horrifying to view without going mad – all Cosmic Deities cause Fright Checks at -10 or worse.

Cosmic Deities are so alien that they must be anchored to this plane by some means when they manifest. A Deity's worshipers have to expend at least 20 HP to anchor it; otherwise, it can't manifest in this dimension and certainly won't reward their petition. These HP are customarily supplied through sacrifice, but might instead be provided through magic or by some hyperdimensional vortex.

No game stats appear for Cosmic Deities. Their very nature defies feeble human efforts at description! Suffice it to say that mere mortals cannot even comprehend such entities, much less reason with or defeat them.

Describing the Indescribable

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know specifically violate every principle of reason – including rational description. This doesn't necessarily help the GM! While words like "indescribable" and "unnamable" might be the best possible adjectives, the players will want to know the difference between this Thing and the last one. Make sure that you think about your Things with as much care as you would any other monster; describe their foulness as it assaults every sense. One good trick is to begin with two creatures that many people already find unpleasant – e.g., an octopus and a bat, or a toad and a rat – and mash them together in your head, adding adjectives as needed. If you get stuck, roll on the following table, alternating between columns A and B until you're inspired again.

Things Man Was Not Meant To Know Description Table

1d, 1d	*Column A*	*Column B*
1-2, 1	Insectile	Corrosive
1-2, 2	Many-Winged	Cloudy
1-2, 3	Writhing	Sickly Green
1-2, 4	Glistening	Foul
1-2, 5	Viscous	Covered With a Thousand Eyes
1-2, 6	Slime-Covered	Diseased
3-4, 1	Quivering	Rugose
3-4, 2	Putrid	Blob-Shaped
3-4, 3	Malodorous	Hideous
3-4, 4	Squamous	Dripping
3-4, 5	Oozing	Tentacled
3-4, 6	Fiery	Shaking
5-6, 1	Many-Limbed	Coal-Black
5-6, 2	Filthy	Greasy
5-6, 3	Colorless	Immense
5-6, 4	Non-Euclidean	Pustulent
5-6, 5	Revolting	Nauseating
5-6, 6	Shambling	Horrible

Ancient Ones

The Ancient Ones are creatures or races who once ruled the Earth (or even our section of the galaxy), but somehow lost control. Some now occupy parallel dimensions, waiting for human servants to assist in their return. Others remain on Earth, dormant but poised to arise when conditions are right.

Ancient Ones are usually physical, and can be attacked by physical means. However, their cultists still consider them gods – and many Ancient Ones have significant psionic or extradimensional powers and resources. They're as terrifying to behold as Cosmic Deities, causing Fright Checks at up to -15. They may appear as a distorted parody of earthly life, such as an impossibly alien creature, or as an indescribable morass of protoplasm, tentacles, and sucker-mouths.

Ancient One

1,342 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+40 (Size, -80%) [80]; DX+5 [100]; IQ+8 [160]; HT+8 [80].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +8; HP+22 (Size, -80%) [9]; Per+4 [20]; Basic Speed+3 [60].

Advantages: Ambidexterity [5]; Claws (Talons) [8]; Energy Reserve 300 (Cosmic; Accessibility, Only where Euclidean geometry is weak and when the stars are right, -80%) [180]; Extra Arms 2 (Extra-Flexible, +50%) [30]; Extra Attacks 3 [75]; Horrifying Wide Window (p. 13) [114]; Magic Resistance 30 [60]; Outsider (p. 27) [226]; Teeth (Fangs) [2]; Terror 11 (Appearance; -10 to Fright Checks; Always On, -20%) [104]; Unkillable 3 (Trigger, Ritual, -25%) [113].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Bad Smell [-10]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Lifebane [-10]; Low Empathy [-20]; Megalomania [-10].

Variations

This is a *minor* Ancient One, the terror of a plateau or an icecap rather than a globe-trampling entity that haunts multiple dimensions. Ancient Ones may have many other potentially horrifying traits, including:

Enemies. Ancient Ones can be fierce rivals! Such an entity often has a worthy opponent – typically an equally revolting Thing with similarly dangerous capabilities. This *might* afford the poor humans a desperate last resort, but Thing Wars can have unpleasant side effects . . .

Gross physical power. Ancient Ones frequently have extremely high attribute scores; DX, HT, and especially IQ can reach 35-40, while ST and HP range into the *thousands* for asteroid-sized beings whirling in the space around dead pulsars. Many Ancient Ones have Warp, either with Hyperjump or restricted to ancient gates and portals (a limitation as severe as -80%). Such entities often possess high DR (DR 20-150), even in material form, and/or Regeneration.

Limited time. Ancient Ones not native to this dimension must wait until some special event before they can manifest on Earth, while native-but-dormant monstrosities have to wait to awaken or escape their material prison. The trigger, whatever it is, should occur extremely infrequently; e.g., once every 100,000 years. If such Things visited Earth more often, there would be nothing left for them to visit.

Mental contact. Some Ancient Ones can establish mental contact with a person and grant special knowledge; this is how worshipers learn what to do in order to serve the Thing. Such an experience is almost guaranteed to blast the contactee's rational mind! Not all Ancient Ones have Horrifying Wide Window; a few merely have Resistant or Immunity to Psionics; see pp. B80-81. Many have massive degrees of psionic power, of any sort available in the campaign.

Useful worshipers. Ancient Ones sometimes need active assistance from "this side" to do whatever they want to do *now* – especially since the stars won't be exactly right for another 8,000 years. This help often takes the form of mass worship, ritual sacrifices, etc. A Thing may require HP, FP, Will, magical energy, or even knowledge from its worshipers. Its cult might count as Allies.

Minions

Cosmic Deities and Ancient Ones often have inferior races of creatures as servants, messengers, and soldiers. These Minions travel to dimensions the Things themselves cannot enter easily or conveniently. While horrible, Minions aren't nearly as terrifying as their masters. Some are still strong enough to wipe out a group of heroes without much thought, but others are fair fights – one at a time.

Minions range from human-sized, even slightly smaller, to the stature of small office buildings – not nearly as mind-boggling as their planetary-scale masters! The GM may wish to use some of the other monsters in ***Horror*** as Minions, suitably remodeled by replacing supernatural curses with alien hyperscience.

Fear of God

Gods need not be tentacled aliens or Lovecraftian embodiments of entropy to arouse fear. The idea that the proper response to God (or to *a* god) is terror wouldn't seem strange to the ancient Mesopotamians, or to certain branches of Hinduism, or to the Aztecs, or for that matter to Jonathan Edwards and other Calvinists. Even "good" gods are fearsome: Diana hunts to death the man who glimpses her bathing, while Zeus' glory incinerates a woman who simply beholds him. Deities are inhumanly powerful beings, often incomprehensibly wrathful. Those driven by human motives – lust, revenge, jealousy, etc. – hardly seem more domesticated. Gods who control priesthoods or Inquisitions might trigger fears of the state; gods of the underworld batten on fear of death; and gods of evil (or *former* gods demoted to devils) feed the fear of Hell.

The line between theological horror and cosmic horror isn't always commandment-clear, either: Arthur Machen recasts "The Great God Pan" as an insensate being outside mortal dimensionality, and the city fathers of Sodom and Gomorrah would surely see little difference between Yahweh and Azathoth. The unwitting adventurer who reawakens Hecate, or Huitzilopochtli, or Kali-Ma, or Odin has Something to fear on a cosmic scale.

Minion

254 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 (Size, -10%) [90]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+2 [40]; HT+6 [60].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1.

Advantages: Detect (All supernatural phenomena and beings) [30]; Terror 4 (Appearance; -3 to Fright Checks; Always On, -20%) [48]. • 40 points chosen from among Affliction [Varies], Ambidexterity [5], Claws [Varies], DR [5/level], Extra Arms (often pseudopods or tentacles) [Varies], Extra Attacks [25/attack], Extra Mouths [5/mouth], Flight (Winged, -25%) [30], Hyperspectral Vision [25], Injury Tolerance [Varies], Innate Attack [Varies], Magic Resistance [2/level], See Invisible [15], Teeth [Varies], and still more Terror [10/level].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Bad Smell [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Lifebane [-10]; Low Empathy [-20]; No Sense of Humor [-10].

Variations

This template describes a "typical" Minion – likely a major servitor race created in unguessably ancient eons to do an Ancient One's bidding. More human-scale examples should have less ST, while larger ones might have ST and HP in the 30-40 range. These beings needn't be humanoid, or have *any* distinct form; many are blobby malignities, like the byle (p. 153). Some Minion races are more intelligent than humanity, with IQ 20 being a reasonable ceiling for the racial average.

Minion races often wield weapons and other technological artifacts; a few even have High TL (p. B23). Some can mentally enslave humans, a feat they might accomplish via magic spells, psionic powers, or some completely alien or hyperscientific form of mind control against which magical and psionic defenses are worthless (although extra Will would still help). Minions generally possess DR or Insubstantiality; those with neither trait inevitably have *other* defenses, such as Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) with Body of Swarm (p. 14), Unkillable, or at the very least lots of Regeneration.

Alien Invaders

Aliens make especially interesting adversaries in a horror campaign, because the GM is free to develop them in any way he chooses. Using the movies as a cue, aliens can be mindless, malevolent eating machines . . . or here to help humanity in some mysterious, powerful way. A common theme is "the alien scout": a single extraterrestrial or spaceship is sent to Earth either to find a suitable world for colonization or to reconnoiter for a planned invasion. This makes a good adventure because a lone invader will operate in secret, and the GM doesn't have to worry about widespread media attention and mass hysteria. On the other hand, mass hysteria works well in a humorous cinematic campaign – especially if the aliens are feared and misunderstood.

Another popular theme is "aliens among us." In this approach, the aliens are basically humanoid, and intermingle with humans to achieve whatever ends they're pursuing. This can make for an intense, paranoid campaign in which the heroes don't know who's human and who's an alien. In fact, some of the *PCs* may be aliens (or Unseelie, in a steampunk campaign; see pp. 82-83), secretly in league with the GM to create an atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia. An alien invaders game may also cross over into a Things Man Was Not Meant To Know campaign if the aliens are especially powerful and ancient, or are servitors of more-powerful beings.

Whatever the aliens want, they're especially difficult for human heroes to deal with. Fiction and occult research can prepare them for vampires and werewolves, but each alien invader has a unique set of abilities, weaknesses, and motivations. Depending on the campaign, details about alien races might be Hidden Lore or even misunderstood Occultism. Because of the variety of aliens in horror, the GM must develop most of the details himself. Aliens can be formless blobs (see *Byle,* p. 153); humanoid but bizarre, with green skin, eyestalks, and laser breath; or *almost* human, except that rubbing alcohol makes them melt. Developing creepy new aliens offers a wonderful opportunity to pit investigators *and* their players against something they actually know *nothing* about.

Alien Invader

220 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 [-20]; DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP-1 [-2].
Advantages: Acute Vision 2 [4]; Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Extended Duration, 100×, +80%; Malediction 1, +100%; Telepathic, -10%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [49]; Detect (Psionics; ESP, -10%) [9]; DR 2 (Flexible, -20%) [8]; Extended Lifespan 4 [8]; High TL 2 [10]; Memory Wipe (p. 12) [38]; Mind Reading (Telecommunication, -20%; Telepathic, -10%; Universal, +50%) [36]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Photographic Memory [10]; Telepathy Talent 2 [10]; Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Telepathic, -10%; Universal, +50%) [57].
Disadvantages: Curious (12) [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Incompetence (Acting, Carousing, Fast-Talk, Panhandling, Politics, Public Speaking, Streetwise) [-7]; Intolerance (Some aspect of human society) [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Unnatural Features (usually the eyes) [-5]. • One -15-point mental disadvantage that provides a motivation: Fanaticism (for conquerors), Lecherousness (12) (for B-movie aliens who abduct beautiful women), Sadism (12) (for those who conduct cruel experiments), etc.
Features: Night Vision 5 (p. 17).

Variations

These stats describe a typical "UFO mythology" alien, such as a Grey, Nordic, or Tall. Invaders may have other traits, depending on their specific form. This template might apply only to aliens bioengineered to subvert Earth!

Many B-movie invaders also have Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]: bug eyes, dripping slime, etc. Other possibilities include the original alien invaders (see *Martians,* pp. 158-159), Reptoids (see *Serpent-Folk,* p. 84), body-snatchers (see *Alien Infiltrators,* pp. 84-85), and xenomorphic Things (pp. 73-76). Aliens might even send androids (p. 88) to spy out the Earth for them.

Fear of the Unnatural

In the natural order of things, we're born, we live, we die, and we stay dead. In the natural order of things, you never hear a talking cat, or witness a stone burst into flower. In the natural order of things, you never glimpse an unearthly light glowing without a torch, or a bird devour a man alive. In the natural order of things, you never see a spirit without a body, or a living fossil.

The Ghost

Ghosts are the spirits of deceased beings that remain connected to the living world, usually through an object or a location. They can inhabit ("haunt") almost any item or place, limited only by the GM's imagination. They might be even more widespread than vampires in the world's legendary consciousness; almost every culture has *some* notion of the spectral undead. The origin of ghost legends may spring from any combination of wishful thinking, hallucinations, schizophrenia, ancestor worship, dreams, nightmares, and shamanic trance states. Ghost stories can be precise or vague – details in such accounts often seem to fade and return like the spirits themselves.

Most ghosts are the spirits of people who were gravely wronged during their lifetime and unable to complete their transition into the world of the dead. (And ghosts aren't limited to humans; many tales involve spectral animals – often dogs or horses – associated with a cursed victim or family.) Common ghost origins include murder at a loved one's hand, betrayal by family or friends, and knowledge of a crime or other foul deed. Almost any serious "unfinished business" may result in a person returning as a ghost. Unfortunately, some ghosts' unfinished business involves murdering someone, meeting the Devil at the crossroads, or punishing the innocent descendants of the long-dead guilty party. Model a ghost haunting a person or a family as an Enemy (usually a Watcher, appearing on 6 or less).

Ghosts can tap into some places or people to siphon energy, which they can then use to replenish their own reserves or to power special abilities. Haunted houses, vulnerable descendants, or the ghost's grave or death spot – or a similar location significant to its existence – often provide such sources. Further possibilities include the deceased's body (mummified, skeletal, whole, or partial) or a possession prized in life (wedding clothes, ceremonial dagger, portrait, etc.). Such a resource is termed a ghost's *focus,* and in some cosmologies, including most conventional ghost stories, every ghost has one specific to itself. Ghosts can only draw additional energy when near their focus. A ghost with no focus is relatively weak, and almost never appears or materializes.

Some animals – including dogs, horses, owls, and bees – can sense particularly powerful or malevolent ghosts.

Feeding Ghosts

Worldwide, ghost stories agree that ghosts need sustenance. *Something* makes ghosts stronger – be that fresh-spilt blood, cooking smells, offerings of rum or candy, worship, or returning to their haunted crypt. Most of the ghost templates in ***Horror*** use an Energy Reserve (p. 20) connected to some focus or necessary condition to represent this for the modern European ghost of folklore and fiction. Other models exist, however.

Bad Places

In some cosmologies, *any* location associated with death or the underworld (caves, brutal crime scenes, cemeteries, battlefields, plague pits, hospitals, etc.), or with trauma and hatred (prisons, insane asylums, etc.), can channel energy to a ghost. Other places are simply more transparent to, or closer to, the spirit realm; e.g., ley-line intersections in a magical background, or sites where dimensions intersect in a cosmic horror world. A dwelling built on a ley nexus, the banks of the River Styx's earthly spring, or "the old Indian burial ground" may attract so many ghosts to feed on its energies that it becomes a haunted house without anything bad ever having happened there! Of course, anyplace that attracts ghosts tends to have bad things happen anyway – having ghosts around all the time can make a person nervous, jumpy, or even homicidal.

Model such ghosts using Regeneration with Fatigue Only (-0%) and an appropriate Accessibility limitation: Only in Bad Places (-20%), Only in Prisons (-40%), etc. A ghost who *gains* power from such places should combine this with Energy Reserve, limited likewise. And one who can *only* dwell in such surrounds – or who must return to them regularly – has a Dependency: One specific Bad Place (its tomb or "the Old Halloran Place") counts as "Occasional" (base -20 points); any tomb, as "Common" (base -10 points); and any Bad Place, as "Very Common" (base -5 points). While not even Arkham or Sunnydale has all that many Bad Places, they can't be used up, don't cost money, and are easy for ghosts to access; thus, they count as one class more common than usual.

Worship

Acts of worship by the living can grant additional FP per day. The amount depends on the number of worshippers (roughly 1 FP per worshipper). Ghost worship is fairly rare in Western horror stories, but many cultures – from Voudunist Haiti to Confucian China back to ancient Rome – practice ancestor worship, venerating (and sacrificing to) the spirits of their dead progenitors. Horrific cults may worship their long-dead sorcerous founder, giving him energy enough to direct them from beyond the grave!

If the ghost *requires* such worship in order to exist (true for most ancestor spirits), this is Maintenance (p. B143). If worship *also* strengthens the ghost, it's Energy Reserve (Accessibility, Granted by Worshippers, -40%), limited because enemies could disrupt the ghost's cult. Such a spirit might have Regeneration (Accessibility, Only in Own Shrine, -80%; Fatigue Only, -0%), too. Some ghosts actually gain energy from sacrificed blood or burnt offerings – usually 1 FP per 1 HP sacrificed, although this depends on the campaign cosmology. This often occurs alongside Uncontrollable Appetite (p. B159).

They Thirst

Which leads to the third method of replenishing and/or increasing FP: drinking or draining energy from the material world. This is most common with vampiric or hungry spirits, like *gaki* (p. 72), but many ghosts – especially in modern fiction – consume life force, while those in the *Odyssey* used blood to materialize. The mechanism can be as simple as Leech, or involve Regeneration or Energy Reserve with a Trigger limitation. Use the latter traits for ghosts who feed on candy, cigarette smoke, or other nonliving substances. Some ghosts have magical or psionic ways to steal FP or HP; these might be innate spells (p. B453) or psionic powers accessible to the dead.

Ghost

229 points

Advantages: Energy Reserve 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6]; Spirit [261]; Telekinesis 1 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [4].

Perks: Can hear own name being spoken anywhere [1].

Disadvantages: Cannot Speak (Substantial Only, -10%) [-13]; Compulsive Behavior *or* Obsession (Ghostly Repetition, p. 23) [-15]; Dread (Exorcism) [-10]; Supernatural Features (Cold Spot) [-5].

Features: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals; Can be turned using True Faith.

Variations

Ghosts might be *psionic* remnants. If so, they'll have ER (Psionic) and the Psionic power modifier (-10%) on Telekinesis, etc. See *Powers* (pp. 30-33).

The ghost of someone who died in a particularly gruesome fashion may be Hideous. Conversely, many ghosts are reportedly Beautiful.

Any ghost might add the Touch modifier (p. 16) to its Insubstantiality – or even have Terror (Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, Cannot Parry, -25%) – to represent a chilling touch. Spectral hands should *definitely* have such traits, along with the Strangle Hold technique (p. 30).

In some cosmologies, all ghosts have Detect for supernatural beings, demons, etc. Some can sense strong emotions in humans by "seeing" their auras. Model the latter gift with Empathy, or using Magery 0 and a racially innate Sense Emotion (p. B245) or Aura (p. B249) spell.

Some ghosts can instantly return to their place of death using Warp (Anchored, Only to death-spot, -80%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%) [20]. Others can appear anywhere their name is spoken: Warp (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Special Portal, Only to summoner, -20%; Trigger, Only when summoned, -40%) [30].

Even ghosts with Cannot Speak can often utter a single, programmed phrase ("Get out!" or "Evangeline"), sing a tuneless children's song, or otherwise unhelpfully allude to their trauma. Some can project their thoughts as speech: Telesend (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP/second, -10%) [27]. Evil ghosts sometimes exploit this ability to "plant" thoughts in mortals' heads, making them "hear voices." These thoughts can't control the victims' actions, but they may trigger repressed anger or fear, causing people to fling themselves off rooftops, slaughter their families, or otherwise behave uncharacteristically. Someone who suffers from Phantom Voices (p. B148) might be haunted by one or more ghosts – and diabolical voices *can* control actions.

Cultures the world over have developed numerous ghost-banes. Represent these with Dread (e.g., bells, brick dust, fireworks, forge or hearth fires, garlic, holy symbols, or horseshoes), Revulsion (asafetida, garlic, etc.), Vulnerability ("ghost swords," hawthorn, iron, and so on), or Weakness (church bells, for instance), as suits the campaign. Chinese ghosts flee from images of what they feared in life – researching a ghost's Phobia could make for some interesting game sessions! If a ghost can be dissipated by destroying its focus, it might have Dependency (Focus; Constantly) and/or Vulnerability (Attacks on focus ×4).

Ghosts generally grow more powerful with age:

Old (100+ years old): Will+2 [10]; Per+1 [5]; FP+9 [27]; improve ER to ER 19 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 2 yards of focus, -70%) [18], for 12 points; increase TK to TK 3 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [12], for 8 points; and reduce Compulsive Behavior or Obsession to -10 points, for 5 points. *+67 points.*

Ancient (500+ years old): Will+4 [20]; Per+2 [10]; FP+18 [54]; improve ER to ER 28 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 5 yards of focus, -60%) [34], for 28 points; increase TK to TK 6 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [24], for 20 points; and reduce Compulsive Behavior or Obsession to -5 points, for 10 points. *+142 points.*

Primeval (2,000+ years old): Will+8 [40]; Per+4 [20]; FP+36 [108]; improve ER to ER 46 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 10 yards of focus, -50%) [69], for 63 points; increase TK to TK 11 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [44], for 40 points; and reduce Compulsive Behavior or Obsession to -1 point, for 14 points. *+285 points.*

Further variations on the basic template include:

Apparition: A basically mindless image, from a glowing "corpse-light" orb (or "will-o'-wisp") to a recognizable body shape. *Stats:* Ghost [229]; add IQ-4 [-80], Will+4 [20], Automaton [-85], Immunity to Mind Control [30], Single-Minded [5], Unfazeable [15], and the feature "Compulsion never reduces with age"; remove Telekinesis; and change Insubstantiality to Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%). *42 points.*

Dybbuk: This ghost from Jewish folklore manifests primarily by possessing the living. In some traditions, dybbuks favor possessing loved ones of the deceased, as it's difficult to differentiate loved ones' natural – sometimes obsessive – desire to look into family affairs from unnatural dybbuk cruelty. (Especially in fiction, "normal" ghosts can possess even non-mediums; use the dybbuk's Possession trait to model them, too.) *Stats:* Haunt (p. 27) [251]; add Bad Temper (6) [-20], ER 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6], Odious Personal Habit (Profane, lewd behavior) [-10], Possession (Costs Fatigue, 5 FP, -25%; Extended Duration, 3×, +20%; Spiritual, -20%) [75], and disadvantages and features as Ghost. *259 points.*

Eidolon: Often confusingly called an "elemental" in occult and horror literature, this is a ghost that mindlessly embodies a single force or emotion: lust, fear, homicidal rage, suicidal despair, alcoholic excess, etc. (Slimer from *Ghostbusters* is an eidolon of gluttony.) It inspires that emotion in others, unconsciously drawing them into its pattern. *Stats:* Phantasm (below) [126]; add Will+3 [15] and Mind Control (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; One Emotion Only, -80%) [25]; and change Invisibility to Invisibility (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Substantial Only, -10%; Switchable, +10%). *164 points.*

Genius Loci: The spirit of a *place.* Like Hill House in *The Haunting,* it may be "born bad," or some horrific event such as a massacre might taint it with evil. Genii loci need not be evil – but those in horror stories usually are! This template includes a variety of "haunted house"-type powers; the GM can mix and match as desired. *Stats:* Haunt (p. 27) [251]; add Per+3 [15], Affliction 1 (Accessibility, Only on sleeping subjects in domain, -80%; Based on IQ, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Disadvantage, Nightmares (6), +10%; Malediction 1, +100%) [14], Affliction 2 (Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Based on Will, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Disadvantage, Unluckiness, +10%; Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [48], Binding 10 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Environmental, Furniture, tree limbs, etc., -40%) [10], Clairsentience (Increased Range, 5×, +20%) [60], Dependency (Domain; Constantly) [-100], ER 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6], Higher Purpose (Protect Domain) [5], Mind Control (Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Emotion Control, -50%; Extended Duration, 10×, +40%) [10], Possession (Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Spiritual, -20%) [20], Regeneration (Fast; Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Fatigue Only, -0%) [20], Sense of Duty (Domain) [-5], Telekinesis 13 (Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [13], Terror 3 (House noises or rustling trees; -2 to Fright Checks; Accessibility, Only in domain, -60%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%) [15], disadvantages and features as Ghost, and the feature "Takes on characteristics of its domain." *339 points.*

Phantasm: An apparition that *can* affect the material world with its powers. *Stats:* Apparition (p. 78) [42]; restore Telekinesis [4]; and change Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) to Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%). *126 points.* For a *howler,* like a screaming skull or a banshee that terrifies with its shriek or wail, add Terror 9 (Shriek; -8 to Fright Checks; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%) [99] – or Affliction 3 (HT-2; Accessibility, Only while visible, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 5 FP, -25%; Hearing-Based, +150%; Heart Attack, +300%; Limited Use, 1/day, -40%; Preparation Required, 10 minutes, -30%) [134].

Poltergeist: This "noisy ghost" knocks on walls, throws things, and generally makes itself a nuisance. Its focus is often a young adolescent in the house it haunts, with whom it shares mental disadvantages (usually at lower self-control numbers) in lieu of a conventional ghostly compulsion. *Stats:* Haunt (p. 27) [251]; add Bad Temper (12) [-10], Dread (Exorcism) [-10], ER 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6], Mute (Substantial Only, -10%) [-23], Supernatural Features (Cold Spot) [-5], Telekinesis 9 (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Magical, -10%) [39], and -15 points in mental disadvantages taken from its focus. *233 points.*

Revenant: This ghost reanimates its corpse in order to right some wrong, complete an unfinished task, etc. For the corpse, select either Intact Undead or Rotting Undead (see *Corporeal Undead Meta-Traits,* p. 27); IQ is 0; ST + Basic Move must be 18, and HP must equal ST; and point total can't exceed 25% of the spirit's points. "Summonable" means the ghost can instantly travel to its corpse, not the opposite. *Stats:* Haunt (p. 27) [251]; add Ally (Corpse; Built on 25%; 15 or less; Minion, +0%; Summonable +100%) [6], ER 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6], Possession (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Puppet Only, -30%; Spiritual, -20%) [100], Puppet (Corpse) [5], Telekinesis 18 (Accessibility, Own corpse only, -30%; Animation, -30%) [36], and disadvantages and features as Ghost. *361 points.*

Shade: A ghost angered by some slight, usually involving its burial rites or descendants' behavior. Shades harm the living by causing bad luck or injury. Examples include the Roman *larvae* and *lemures,* the Japanese *onryō,* the New Guinean *forso*, and ghosts "too ornery for Hell." *Stats:* Specter (p. 27) [279]; add Will+4 [20], Bad Temper (12) [-10], Dread (Exorcism) [-10], Dread (Fire, drums, beans, or other Common item; 10 yards) [-38], ER 10 (Magical; Accessibility, Only within 1 yard of focus, -80%) [6], Minor Curse (p. 12) [30], Obsession (9) (Punish the disrespectful) [-15], Selfish (6) [-10], Supernatural Features (Cold Spot, Pallor) [-15], and Telekinesis 6 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [24]; and modify Insubstantiality with "Must materialize if summoned" (-30%). *237 points.*

Shadow

105 points

This ghost is created when someone evil (usually a sorcerer) dies and swears a pact to avoid Hell. He *must* commit vile deeds or be damned forever! Should his Fanaticism in this regard falter, he'll lose his many advantages with the Pact limitation, leaving him a mortal trapped in Shadow Form with a terrible Dependency he can't feed.

Everything dies, baby, that's a fact
But maybe everything that dies someday comes back
– Bruce Springsteen, "Atlantic City"

Advantages: Dark Vision (Pact, -15%) [22]; Doesn't Breathe (Pact, -15%) [17]; Doesn't Eat or Drink (Pact, -15%) [9]; ER 10 (Magical; Pact, -15%) [26]; High Pain Threshold (Pact, -15%) [9]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards (Pact, -15%) [26]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving; Pact, -15%) [22]; Leech 1 (Freezing, +20%; Pact, -15%; Steal FP, +50%) [39]; Obscure 10 (Vision; Area Effect 2, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Pact, -15%) [35]; Temperature Tolerance 10 (Pact, -15%) [9]; Terror 7 (-6 to Fright Checks; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, Cannot Parry, -25%; Pact, -15%) [54]; Unaging (Pact, -15%) [13].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Life Energy; Illegal; Daily) [-30]; Dread (Light) [-30]; Dread (Religious Symbols) [-10]; Fanaticism (Evil) [-15]; Lifebane [-10]; Shadow Form (Always On; Can Carry Objects, Light, -20%) [-16]; Supernatural Features (Cold Spot) [-5]; Weakness (Sunlight; 1d/minute) [-60].

Features: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals; Can be turned using True Faith; Sterile.

Ghostly Possession Modifiers

Ghosts capable of possessing the living traditionally favor subjects who are under stress – especially stress resembling the sort the ghost experienced in life (or at death). Optionally, apply these modifiers to ghosts' Possession rolls in a horror campaign:

Subject willing or has Mindlink with ghost: +10
Subject's soul has left his body (near-death experience, astral travel, etc.): +8
Subject is comatose: +8
Subject undergoing painful or terrifying ordeal (torture, sexual molestation, starvation, etc.): +6
Subject has Slave Mentality: +6
Subject's mind is altered or euphoric (drugs, alcohol, fever, etc.): +4
Subject is tired: +2 per full 1/3 of FP lost to missed sleep
Each previous possession of *that* subject by the ghost: +1 (maximum +3)

Also apply a bonus (usually +1) if the subject has any similarities to the ghost: physical appearance, clothing, etc. The ghost receives bonuses especially when the target's emotional or mental condition aligns with his own compulsions; e.g., if the ghost killed himself over a love affair, he might get +2 or more to possess someone in similar heartbreak, and perhaps +4 or more to possess a person on the verge of suicide! A ghost possesses its Puppet(s) *automatically.*

Some Specialized Ghosts

Ghosts are perhaps the most individual of monsters. While all ghost stories have similarities, the best ones turn on the ghost's personality, life history, and environment. And although such tales are told worldwide, the local and historical variations are boundless.

Doppelgänger

Legends of ghostly doubles – *doppelgängers* – differ widely, but are commonly associated with a person executed for a crime he didn't commit. Typically malign, such a spirit attempts to cause someone else's wrongful execution. The doppelgänger assumes the form of a moral, innocent person, and then commits terrible deeds in that guise. It starts out with minor insults and works its way up to theft, assault, and finally murder. A doppelgänger's focus is usually an image of the victim (e.g., photograph or painting), but it might be a mirror, in which case the doppelgänger only materializes when the victim gazes into it. To exorcise the ghost, one must discern its true identity. The doppelgänger also disappears if the real criminal is found and executed.

Other doppelgängers are simply "death-fetches": irrefutable omens of their look-alike's impending demise. The Irish banshee is such a fetch, although it might not look like the victim. The banshee's famous wail, however, only occurs when its victim is in earshot.

Headless Horseman

Headless horsemen are the ghosts of beheaded military officers. Some trace their origins to executions for earthly crimes ranging from murder to high treason. Others seem to be the result of battle casualties – "head sliced off by a single blow" or "head carried away by a cannonball" are the usual stories.

A headless horseman haunts the area where he was killed, his focus being the plot of land where he met his end, his grave, or even the axe and chopping block used to execute him. He's bound to an area "a night's ride" from this focus. He materializes every night as a headless figure in a black cape, riding a black horse. He's usually seeking something during his ride; depending on the legend, this could be a loved one, a betrayer, or even his head! While he appears to be physical, he's as incorporeal as any ghost most of the time. A horseman's most common attack is to materialize, sever his victim's head, and make off with it. Such a ghost can be exorcised like any other, but typically high Will makes this task difficult.

Headless horsemen might appear in any campaign, including those set in the modern day. A common 20th-century equivalent is the dispatch rider whose head was carried off by a wire strung across the road (a common trick of partisans). A headless SS motorcyclist haunting the roads of Normandy would make an interesting encounter.

Phantom Ship

A common legend among sailors and lighthouse keepers, the phantom ship nearly always has its origins in a lengthy tale of a vessel lost on stormy seas. It materializes under conditions similar to those present during its loss. The phantom ship is usually a multi-masted schooner or clipper, as many of these stories originated in the Age of Sail.

The ghost of its former commander is almost always the captain, while the crew typically appear as skeletons (although they're still ghosts).

Depending on the legend, the phantom may be a harmless apparition, or its captain and crew might seek vengeance on other ships in the area. Regardless, it frequently makes a material impression on the world around it. Sailors are rescued, and only after a succession of adventures do they discover that they're on a phantom. Such vessels are also known to appear in the midst of modern naval battles and disrupt the action. They even appear in inland towns to entice young men away on phantom adventures.

A phantom ship's focus is the wreck of the ship itself. This may be on the ocean floor or beached on a nearby island.

The Tulpa

Also called a "thought-form," a *tulpa* is a ghost created from nothing by unconscious desire, deliberate sorcery, or psychic discipline. Originally a Tibetan concept, it entered the Western world through the writings of Theosophist adventurer Alexandra David-Néel in the 1920s. In 1972, the Toronto Society for Psychical Research invented a ghost named "Philip" – and then contacted "him" in a séance!

Initially, a tulpa is a weak thing, entirely dependent on its creator's desire or will. Its Dependency begins at "Constantly" and lessens as the creator puts more energy into it. Its compulsion or obsession is whatever will or desire led to its (conscious or unconscious) creation, from "Watch the gate tonight" to "Stop nuclear waste dumping." Eventually it grows stronger, learns to feed on others, and – unless destroyed by its creator – becomes independent. A free-willed tulpa might have any sort of powers, or just a whole lot of ST and FP for killing the deserving.

Newly Created Tulpa: Phantasm (p. 79) [126]; add Dependency (Creator's will or desire; Weekly) [-40] and Vulnerability (Any attack by creator ×4) [-40]; and remove ER. *40 points.*

Mature Tulpa: Specter (p. 27) [279]; add ST+2 [20], Will+2 [10], Automaton [-85], Cannot Speak (Substantial Only, -10%) [-13], Compulsive Behavior or Obsession [-15], ER 20 (Magical; Accessibility, Granted by creator, -40%) [36], Immunity to Mind Control [30], Maintenance (Creator's will or desire; 1 person; Weekly) [-5], Single-Minded [5], Supernatural Features (Cold Spot) [-5], Telekinesis 3 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [12], Unfazeable [15], Vulnerability (Any attack by creator ×4) [-40], and the feature "Compulsion never reduces with age." *244 points.*

Free-Willed Tulpa: Mature Tulpa [244]; add HP+2 [4], *another* Will+2 [10], and Leech 2 (Accessibility, Only on people who share its will or desire, -40%; Malediction 1, +100%; Ranged, +40%; Steal FP, -25%) [51]; remove Slave Mentality and Vulnerability; improve Telekinesis to Telekinesis 10 (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Magical, -10%) [40], and change Maintenance to (Anyone's will or desire; 1 person; Monthly) [-2]. *420 points.*

Malevolent Objects

Ghostly life after death is practically normality itself compared to life where there shouldn't be, and never has been, any. An inanimate object taking on a life of its own is the shadowy inverse of the ghost. The horror is compounded when the thing turns on its human creators. Malevolent objects are almost never the result of possession or poltergeists – the explanation for their sudden animation is usually never made clear.

Malevolent objects come in many shapes and forms, but they're often items of some personal importance. Children's toys, particularly dolls and stuffed animals, are popular candidates. Furniture – beds, antique rockers, large chests, etc. – might also become malevolent, although the threat would most likely be limited to Fright Checks. Even particular articles of clothing, such as an old dress found in that trunk in the attic, may suddenly turn against their wearer, or against someone hiding in the attic.

Mad machines also haunt the modern world. Vehicles are the most common – killer cars, phantom big rigs, and even malign planes and boats harass the innocent. Other examples include the megalomaniacal computer (p. 88), the TV that shows only horrible crimes being committed against (or *by*) the viewer, and the telephone that badgers its owner with incessant ringing and sounds of terror (or maniacal laughter, or pleas of dead loved ones) emanating from the receiver (see *The Cell Phone Problem,* p. 122).

The GM should specify the object's DR, HP, and HT; if it's mobile, then also assign ST, DX, and Move. Such things rarely need an IQ score – their motive is only to destroy or terrorize humans. Stopping a malevolent object requires nothing short of destroying it. Even then, the evil may not be at rest – picture the doll's severed head still cackling away . . .

The Natural Unnatural

Perfectly natural creatures, either out of place (like the phantom pumas regularly seen in England today) or out of time (like the *mokèlé-mbèmbé,* dinosaurs reputed to exist even now in equatorial Africa), anchor the world of *cryptozoology:* the search for ambiguous, legendary beasts. Some *cryptids* (as such things are called) are manlike; the ape-man (pp. 152-153) and gill-man (p. 153) are both based on such beings. Many combine evocative folklore with truly monstrous zoology; the Loch Ness Monster is, according to some theories, a 60' eel! (For a more traditional sea serpent, see pp. 154-155.) Such exaggeratedly huge creatures can be frightening in their own right – and on a deeper level, enormous or out-of-place cryptids can symbolize Nature gone horribly wrong, or possibly taking her rightful revenge on heedless mankind. The cryptid's lair, whether the cool rain forests of the Sasquatch or the Congolese jungles of the mokèlé-mbèmbé, is Nature's haunted house, and the cryptids we can never quite find yet always somehow see are her ghosts.

The Piasa Bird: A Sample Cryptid

A less common cryptid, the piasa bird is a legendary creature of the Illini Indians. Near Alton, Illinois, a huge bird is carved into the cliff face of an enormous bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. First seen by Father Marquette in 1673, the French explorer noted that no Indian, no matter how brave, would look upon the carving. This is due to the terrifying legend of the beast, still spoken of in the region.

Piasa translates from the Illini language as "the bird that devours men." Thousands of years before white settlers arrived, the giant bird held sway over much of the land, able to carry away deer in its talons and feed on them at its nest in the bluff. Once it mistook an Indian hunter for a small deer, and from that time on it desired only human flesh. Many warriors attempted to slay the creature, but without success. A chief named Ouatoga finally set out on a solitary quest for the beast, fasting for many weeks and praying to the Great Spirit for guidance. The Spirit appeared to Ouatoga in a dream and directed him to assemble 20 of his best warriors to hide in waiting, while another warrior waited alone as bait.

Ouatoga was courageous and offered himself as the bait. The bird was spotted atop the bluff. Swift as lightning, it swept down upon the chief. All 20 warriors released their arrows and the piasa fell screaming into the river. Ouatoga was safe, and the creature's image was engraved upon the bluff in commemoration. Ever after, however, the piasa bird was thought unlucky; a brave who felt the shadow of the piasa pass over him knew that he would die soon.

If such a creature did once exist, could others still inhabit the bluffs of the Mississippi Valley? Does the piasa relate to the mysterious thunderbird of the Southwest, or to the many pterodactyl sightings in modern Texas? Tales of enormous beasts are prolific throughout Indian culture. Gigantic wolves and fish are spoken of – even Bigfoot (originally described as a giant bear) may have his origins in Indian lore. Shamans killed by such monsters are likely candidates for manitous (p. 66), and may provide unexpected assistance (or obstacles) to investigators attempting to track down the truth behind the legends.

Fear of Witches

Another extremely common fear worldwide, the fear of the evil magic-worker living beside you – of the unnatural other – has caused as much misery as the witches have ever been accused of. Over 45,000 people were executed (by law or lynching) as witches during the Great Witch Panic in Europe from 1450 to 1650. Sporadic witch-panics continue today, with occasionally fatal results, in Africa, Latin America, and Indonesia.

It's almost enough to make you want to put a murrain on someone's cattle, blight his crops, and give him the evil eye . . .

Witch

150 points

Advantages: Ally (Cat with Extra Life, Special Rapport, Telesend, and Hidden Lore; Built on 75%; 12 or less; Summonable, +100%) [12]; Cunning Folk 1 [10]; Curse (p. 12) [47]; Practitioner (pp. 39-40), with Witch lens [80]; See Invisible (Spirit) [15]; Special Rapport (Familiar) [5].

Disadvantages: Secret (Witch) [-30]; Supernatural Feature (Witch's Mark) [-5].

Skills: Poisons (H) IQ+2 [8]-16*.

Spells: Four *more* spells, which will be either (H) IQ [2]-14† or (VH) IQ-1 [2]-13†.

* Includes +1 for Cunning Folk.
† Includes +1 for Magery.

Variations

This bare-bones template could be endlessly expanded. Demonic Patrons, wonderfully terrible Afflictions via the evil eye, and supernatural Flight (on or off a broomstick) are only the first ingredients in the potential cauldron. African and Navajo witches are usually shapeshifters; European witches could call up storms; and Malayan witches can travel into dreams and the lands of the dead. Much of this can be accomplished by adding more spells and Magery, until the witch becomes as dangerous – and as terrifying – as any other monster in the book.

Fear of Others

From the suddenly hushed voices as you enter a room to the weird hang-up phone calls you get at night, a pattern emerges: There are people – if that's even what They are – conspiring against you. They don't like you, which means that They don't like normal, decent folk, either. Moderns see the hand of the hated Other in murder and in advertising; our medieval ancestors saw it in blighted grain, stillborn children, and cattle that dried up. Anything that goes wrong is somebody's fault – and They are out there, planning to do it again. They hide in plain sight, in anonymous crowds or in wild places where normal, decent people don't go: in our era, burned-out industrial neighborhoods; in medieval times, the moors. They are among us and They are watching.

The Unseelie

The notion of the Others, up to no good, can spawn conspiracy theories (see *Conspiracy,* p. 117) or foster belief in the hidden race, the infiltrators, the *not quite human* beings just outside our peripheral vision. A powerful version of this legend is the myth of the *Unseelie.* The Scots divided faeries into two groups: The Seelie, or "blessed" faeries, were at least neutral to humanity.

The Unseelie, though, were in league with Hell and the restless dead – they were malevolent races who hated mankind and sought only to do him harm.

In folklore, however, almost *all* faeries have characteristics that the Scots ascribed to the Unseelie. They're soulless, capricious, cruel, and selfish. They ruin the crops and sour the milk. Their "elf-shot" weapons never miss and are always poisoned. They live under the hills, or deep in dark and tangled forests, emerging only to steal babies and rape maidens foolish enough to be alone outside at night.

Belief in faeries slowly receded as populations became less dependent on farming and had less contact with the wilderness, and as more romantic and *cute* faerie stories were written. By the Victorian era, anthropologists had a great deal of work to do separating genuine ancient faerie lore from the vast body of artistic, humorous, and pious work layered atop it during the three previous centuries. They came up with an ingenious theory: Faerie legends are half-remembered stories of the earliest inhabitants of Britain, inaccurately called "Picts" by these scholars. Pushed aside by invading Celts and Saxons, the "Pictish" race took to living in hills and underground, raiding settlements for food and women, killing where they could with primitive flint axes and arrows (helpfully found in abundance all across the Unseelie stomping grounds in Britain). Eventually, deprived of light and nutrition, the hidden race degenerated – in good Victorian anthropological fashion – into stunted, cannibalistic troglodytes.

Horror writer Arthur Machen took these theories as the basis for his tales of the Little People, who lurked in the hills practicing ancient magics, occasionally emerging from hiding to further some nefarious plan. They communicated through hints, inscriptions, songs, and susurration that no outsider could decipher. Those who investigated these communications inevitably came to a bad end. Some of Machen's work hints that the debased folk intermingled with the anonymous crowds in London, slipping through the streets with their Stone Age stalking and killing skills intact. Such Machen-style Unseelie would be excellent monsters for a Victorian-era game, or even more threatening presences in a medieval setting.

To properly build fear with the Unseelie, emphasize their invisibility. They may be lurking in the alley, readying their deadly flint arrows and axes; they may attack from ambush in the hills by the standing stones, and then vanish into the limestone tunnels. These Unseelie can't match our heroes in a stand-up fight, especially if guns enter the equation. Instead, they strike from the shadows to deplete adventurers' ammunition, lead investigators deep into the caves or chalk hills until they become completely lost, and then swarm their tired victims in pitch blackness.

Faerie Fear Filters

Like the vampire, the Unseelie can fill many different fear slots, depending on which aspects of the legend you emphasize. To the Victorians, the entire concept of a "degraded race" epitomized the fear of taint (pp. 57-60), and the hideous possibility that such beings had interbred with their own ancestors only made things worse. Working from that fear of sex brings us to the fear of nature – faeries have always had much of the nature spirit to them, which quality they share with the shaggy ones (p. 69). As well, "Pictish" Unseelie are yet another version of the fear of the natives (p. 66).

The various myths of the Wild Hunt, or Machen's story "The Great God Pan," indicate that the Unseelie also intersect with the shaggy ones in the fear of madness (pp. 67-69) – another trait that the Victorians associated with cultural and racial degeneracy. With their stunted forms, the Unseelie serve as metaphoric examples of the mutilated, too. Finally, as Machen demonstrated, they work well in cosmic horror as emblems of the impossibly lost and ancient past still haunting the (supposedly) rational and progressive present.

Unseelie

-76 points

This template depicts a "Victorian naturalist" version of Machen's debased little folk, with no magical powers whatsoever. The Ultrasonic Speech and racial Gesture skill represent a robust and redundant system of hisses, clicks, chalk-marks, and physical gestures, allowing covert communication even in the presence of others.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 [-20]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT-1 [-10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -1; HP+3 [6]; Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Flexibility [5]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Recovery [10]; Reduced Consumption 2 (Cast-Iron Stomach, -50%) [2]; Resistant to Poison (+8) [7]; Silence 2 [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance (Cold) 1 [1]; Ultrasonic Speech [10].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Innumerate [-5]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Low TL 8 [-40]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human beings) [-15]; Paranoia [-10]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Secret (Hidden Race) [-20]; Sense of Duty (To Unseelie race) [-15].

Racial Skills: Gesture (E) IQ+4 [12]-12.

Racial Talent: +3 to Camouflage, Disguise, Scrounging, Stealth, Survival (Swampland), and Urban Survival [15].

Variations

Some Unseelie are Ugly, even downright Hideous. An unusually large percentage of them possess Bowlegged and Dwarfism, as the pressures of evolution continue to force the race into a smaller and smaller niche. For cavern-dwellers, Albinism (p. B165) may be common, too. Depending on the campaign, Unseelie might have the Enthrallment or Hypnotism skills, the Terror advantage, or various types of unpleasant magic. Unseelie Lecherousness applies *especially* to attractive humans – the dying Unseelie race yearns to replenish its gene pool from humanity's superior stock.

Legendary Cannibals

From Wells' Morlocks, to the titular *C.H.U.D.*s, to the extended clans of *The Hills Have Eyes* and lesser slasher flicks, the "cannibal tribe" is a potent horror trope. Unlike the pure Unseelie, it seldom "lurks among us." Rather, like the original cannibals of the West Indies, or the "Sawney Beane" clan of Scottish legend, it lurks in a Bad Place (pp. 128-130), waiting for foolish trespassers. Legendary cannibals usually have high – if unsophisticated – melee combat skills, from Brawling to Two-Handed Axe/Mace (which is to say, Chainsaw). They almost never use firearms.

Legendary Cannibal: Unseelie (p. 83) [-76]; remove ST and HT penalties, Absolute Direction, Flexibility, Low TL, Paranoia, Resistant to Poison, Ultrasonic Speech, racial skill, and racial Talent; reduce Night Vision to 2; and change SM to 0, Secret to (Cannibalistic Murderer) [-30], and Sense of Duty to (Clan) [-10]. *-58 points.*

Troglodyte: The legendary cannibal as a humanoid underground dweller. Suitable for fantasy, modern horror, or post-apocalypse, it's the cockroach of horror settings. *Stats:* Unseelie (p. 83) [-76]; add Acute Hearing 4 [8] and Claws (Blunt) [3]; reduce Low TL to 2; change Night Vision 5 advantage to Night Vision 6 feature (p. 17); and vary Survival by home environment. *-40 points.*

Evil Faerie

358 points

Finally, here's a *supernatural* interpretation of the Unseelie from Scots and earlier folklore – a stark contrast to degenerates and cannibals.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 [40]; IQ+1 [20]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: FP+10 [30].
Advantages: Magery 2 [25]; Morph (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%) [95]; Threshold Entity (p. 27) [227].
Disadvantages: Curious (12) [-5]; Distractible [-1]; Dread (Iron) [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Intolerance (Racial) [-10]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Vow (Keep to the letter of any promise) [-15]; Vulnerability (Iron ×2) [-20].
Quirks: Dislikes being called a "fairy" [-1].
Spells: Two spells, each either (H) IQ+2 [4]-13* or (VH) IQ+1 [4]-12*.
Features: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit.

* Includes +2 for Magery.

Variations

Evil faeries are *at least* either Beautiful or Ugly – there are no "average-looking" specimens. Thanks to generations of soft-focus romanticizing, even evil faeries don't have an immediate bad Reputation in games set after about 1700. For every 200 years earlier, give them Reputation -1 (as cruel, sadistic monsters), to a maximum of -4. Their spells vary, but Charm, Pain, and Sleep are common. They prefer hunting weapons, such as bows and spears. Depending on the campaign, faeries may also have a Dread of holy symbols, hawthorn, inside-out clothing, or the sound of church bells or a cock's crow.

Other Hidden Races

Any hidden race can fill the mythic role of the Unseelie in a horror campaign, including vampires (pp. 57-59), werewolves (pp. 60-61), and palefaces (see *Evil Clown,* pp. 68-69). Races such as ape-men (pp. 152-153) and gill-men (p. 153) can be the objects of cryptozoological investigation; see *The Natural Unnatural* (pp. 81-82). Hidden races might even be Minions of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (pp. 75-76). Serpent-folk offer an especially flexible example.

Serpent-Folk

108 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX+3 [60]; HT+1 [10].
Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 4 [8]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; DR 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [6]; Nictitating Membrane 2 [2]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Striker (Tail; Crushing; Clumsy, -2 to hit, -40%) [3]; Strong Venom (p. 16) [22]; Teeth (Fangs) [2].
Disadvantages: Cold-Blooded (50°F) [-5]; Secret (Hidden Race) [-20].
Features: Either bipedal or No Legs (Slithers).

Variations

Serpent-folk can be cryptids living in the Brazilian rainforest, pure Unseelie "worms of the Earth," or covert Reptoid alien invaders (p. 76). These last two might possess Alternate Form (Human; Needs Sample, -50%) [8]. Cryptid and Unseelie serpent-folk have Low TL; alien invaders, High TL.

Alien Infiltrators

The rise of science fiction, followed closely by an increase in "fifth column" paranoia during WWII, led to the newest update of the Unseelie myth: alien infiltrators silently controlling, possessing, or replacing humans. It began with Joseph J. Millard's *The Gods Hate Kansas* in 1941, but the theme exploded during the Cold War. In 1951, Robert A. Heinlein presented alien parasites as *The Puppet Masters.* Alien invaders in both the movie *Invaders from Mars* (1953) and the BBC TV serial *Quatermass II* (1955) used telecontrol of "marked" humans in a space-age update of the witch's mark (p. 26). But it was Jack Finney's 1955 novel *The Body Snatchers* – and Don Siegel's film version, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* the following year – which cemented the "pod people" into the horror consciousness as the new Unseelie.

Below are two examples of body-snatching alien races. There could be many more . . . all around you!

The Arendians

269 points

The Arendians are an alien species that came to Earth on Comet Arend-Roland around 10,000 B.C., or in 1956 . . . or just last month, depending on your campaign. Opalescent clouds of charged particles, Arendians hop from host to host, usually causing their new bodies to lose personality and then deteriorate rapidly. They must drain intellect and health from others to survive. On high-tech worlds, they can create formulas to slow the process or build androids to occupy, but their goal remains domination and control.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ+10 (Accessibility, Limited to host body's IQ, or to IQ 3 without host, -40%) [120].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed-2 [-40].
Advantages: 360° Vision [25]; Body of Air [36]; Leech 1 (Contact Agent, -30%; Link, +10%; Psionic, -10%; Steal HT, +100%) [43]; Leech 1 (Contact Agent, -30%; Link, +10%; Psionic, -10%; Steal IQ, +300%) [93]; Permeation (Flesh) [5]; Possession (Assimilation, +10%; Parasitic, -60%; Psionic, -10%) [40]; Unaging [15].
Disadvantages: Callous [-5]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Draining (HT and IQ Theft; Accessibility, Only affects *host's* HP, and only every *other* day, -40%) [-3]; Mute (Accessibility, Only in cloud form, -10%) [-22]; Unhealing (Partial) [-20]; Weakness (Electromagnetic Fields; 1d/minute; Accessibility, Only outside host, -10%; Fatigue Only, -50%) [-8].

The one test of the really weird is simply this – whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim.

– H.P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature"

Pod People

46 points

Other aliens can replace just *one* host, ever, growing the replacement body in a giant seedpod concealed nearby before "flowering" into human form. Replacing the host dissolves him, while stealing his memories for the pod person – a process most simply modeled by Possession rather than as a complex linked attack (Corrosion Attack + Mind Probe + Morph).

Advantages: Mindlink (9 fellow pod creatures) [10]; Permeation (Flesh) [5]; Possession (Accessibility, Only on sleeping subjects, -20%; Assimilation, +10%; Limited Use, Once Ever, -80%; Parasitic, -60%; Preparation Required, 8 hours, -60%) [20]; Telesend (Racial, -20%; Telepathic, -10%) [21].
Disadvantages: Callous [-5]; Hidebound [-5].

The Metamorphic Invader

John W. Campbell's story "Who Goes There?" rotated the werewolf myth out of the fear of nature and put it squarely between the fear of the universe and the fear of others. It became Howard Hawks' *The Thing from Another World* (and then John Carpenter's *The Thing*), and has inspired countless homages and knockoffs ever since. In short, it has invaded our subconscious.

The metamorphic invader, like the werewolf, is a seemingly normal human who hides a killing beast. However, it eats to reproduce, making it a predatory, monstrous Unseelie race. Where the Unseelie pose the question, "Who's watching us?", the metamorphic invader poses a creepier one: "Who, exactly, is *us?*"

Metamorphic Invader

443 points

The invader's Mind Probe lets it copy the basic personality and memories of the person it's replicating – it *only* works on such subjects. At the GM's discretion, the invader might still suffer from "copy drift," giving the victim's close friends +1 or +2 to detect the imposture. The creature needs three hours to master a new species; thereafter, it can switch shapes normally. It "breeds" by devouring its own mass in flesh and then dividing like a bacterium.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+6 [60]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10].
Advantages: Ambidexterity [5]; Claws (Talons) [8]; Constriction Attack [15]; Double-Jointed [15]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 10) [20]; Extra Arms 3 (Extra-Flexible, +50%; Switchable, +10%) [48]; Extra Attack 3 (Accessibility, Only in forms with more than two arms, -10%) [68]; Extra Head (Extraneous, -20%; Switchable, +10%) [14]; Hard to Kill 5 [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40]; Mimicry [10]; Mind Probe (Accessibility, Only on replicated subjects, -40%; Link, +10%; Universal, +50%) [24]; Morph (Link, +10%; Needs Sample, -15%; Nuisance Effect, Takes 3 hours rather than 10 seconds when replicating a new species for the first time, -5%; Reverts only at death, +25%) [115]; Single-Minded [5]; Stretching 3 [18].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Bestial [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obsession (9) (Hunt. Kill. Reproduce.) [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats human beings) [-15]; Slow Eater [-10]; Uncongenial [-1]; Unusual Biochemistry [-5].
Racial Skill Modifiers: +2 to Acting and Fast-Talk [8].

Variations

For invaders as an *ongoing* hidden race, remove Bestial and Obsession.

Fear of Disease

Killing a third of humanity tends to get people's attention. The Pest, the Black Death, the Great Dying – the bubonic plague catalyzed the fear of disease, even as it burned its grim designs onto Western culture. The mysterious figure in black, bringing the rats with him; the tolling of the discordant bell as the swollen grotesque staggers toward your doorway; the surrender to madness as the world disintegrates . . . all of these fears emanate from the fear of disease. And somehow, there's scant comfort in the discovery that disease *isn't* the breath of demons, the hand of a hateful god, or the machination of a hidden conspiracy, but instead the work of trillions of tiny, swarming monsters.

The Killer Virus

The killer virus can serve as the horror itself, as the bringer of the horror, or as the result of the horror. In any of these three roles, the virus can be the centerpiece of the campaign or of one taut scenario, an ongoing grim backdrop, or a distant menace. The details depend on how focused on medical themes the GM wants his game to be.

The Plague Is the Horror

The pestilence is the thing that heroic medical and emergency personnel work to stop before millions die – the stuff of movies such as *The Andromeda Strain* and *Outbreak*. This is a tailor-made no-magic horror scenario. Scientific articles about or even popular descriptions of modern plagues such as the Ebola and Marburg viruses provide plenty of potential material for campaigns ranging from the goriest splatter to the most harrowing psychological horror. Plagues needn't be modern; heroes fighting the Black Death or smallpox in 16th-century London (or the 21st-century Congo) face the same desperate fear of a horrific killer just beyond their technological reach.

Straightforward medical suspense requires player investment; they must believe in the town under quarantine, have party members infected, or find the PCs faced with enemies who make their progress a personal matter. Perhaps the crusty general doesn't want to risk saving lives – or the leering necromancer wants to see the city strewn with corpses. The team can enjoy some crisis decision-making as they choose between expending valuable time and resources thwarting their foe, and staying in the lab desperately searching for a cure. Even if they fail, the game isn't over – as Stephen King's *The Stand* demonstrates, the plague might be only the beginning (see *Post-Apocalypse,* p. 119).

The Plague Brings the Horror

In *The Stand,* the plague destroys civilization and reason, clearing the way for the unnatural, magical struggle of good and evil. Such a disaster could level the playing field between man and Unseelie, or the social collapse might fuel maniacal cults of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (pp. 73-75). As if global cataclysm and typhoid fever weren't bad enough, horror is also full of outbreaks that create supernatural effects, either through pseudoscience or by unleashing the life energies of the millions of dead. In Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend,* a pandemic turns the survivors into vampires. Horror diseases might also create B-movie zombies (p. 91) or be the evolutionary trigger transforming humans into ravening Minions of far-future Things. Some monsters may be immune, and be tempted to prey more openly on mankind as civilization's defenses fall and fresh meat piles up in the streets. And with multitudes dying suddenly and traumatically, there will be a lot more ghosts around . . .

The Horror Brings the Plague

Who would want such a horrible thing? Someone truly horrible, of course! Nosferatu (p. 87) spread plague as a matter of course. A necromancer might move from capitalizing on the pestilence to taking an active hand in it. Conspiracies of hidden villains could unleash biological-warfare agents or magically engineered pathogens for their own fell purposes. Cults worshiping Things Man Was Not Meant To Know may uncork the virus as a mad sacrifice to their uncaring Cosmic Deity. And a monster might even unwittingly spread a horrific disease in its wake – imagine a werewolf with plague-carrying fleas or a succubus who transmits demonic STDs.

Stopping the Plague

The heroes might be able to halt the plague by rediscovering lost magic, undertaking a desperate quest to sear the heart out of the Fallen Pest-Lord, or staking nosferatu. That's plenty for many campaigns! However, players with a more cerebral bent – or whose PCs have a lot of medical knowledge – may want to work directly on a cure. In that case, use *New Inventions* or *Gadgeteering* (pp. B473-477), as appropriate. The "gadget" in question is the suppressant, vaccine, or antidote, and several additional considerations become important.

Tech Level

Tech level varies with the disease. A hyperscientific cognitive biowar fever left behind in an Ancient One city might be TL12, but reading the right tome in the Vatican Library may reduce its mystery – and the cure's effective TL. Anything magical, supernatural, or parascientific should be considered at least two TLs higher in a no-magic or secret-magic setting, meaning that it *requires* gadgeteering.

Required Skills

The relevant skill is Physician or Bioengineering (Vaccines), not Engineer. The GM may wish to require specialization in epidemiology, virology, etc., or skill in Biology specialized in biochemistry or microbiology. The disease's nature might also call for use of Alchemy, Expert Skill (Epidemiology), Hazardous Materials, Occultism, Pharmacy, Thaumatology, Weird Science, or even Biology for alien planet types.

Concept

A *player* who deduces the disease's vector, etiology, cause, and true nature (demonic imp-virus, mummy cooties, mad-science serums in the water, germs from planet Zelkor, or whatever) should get a bonus on the Concept roll.

Prototype

Make a Prototype roll once per month – or once a *year*, in a high-realism campaign. Even at TL7-8, disease research requirements are grim: a cure for polio required millions of dollars and decades of research. In the case of AIDS, *billions* of dollars and over 20 years of study have developed only a few (expensive and bulky) suppressants. If the germ is a variation on a known bug, or if there has been a long, ongoing research effort on the disease, the GM might realistically cut research time from years to months or weeks. Such time scales, as abbreviated as they are, may still prove too long for many campaigns. Fortunately, PCs often have magic, high technology, secret alien formulae, and other advantages that the Mayo Clinic doesn't – and when all else fails, the GM can adjust things cinematically.

Cinematic Cures

Larger-than-life germ-stomping uses *Gadgeteering* (pp. B475-477). The Gadgeteer advantage (p. B56) is *mandatory*. Relevant skills are as discussed above (typically Physician), but the GM may also wish to require Science!, Weird Science, or something similarly cinematic and arcane. Cinematic horror cures use the standard gadgeteering modifiers, times, costs, etc. with these Complexity levels:

Average: A *suppressant* that stops the development or progress of symptoms.

Complex: A *vaccine* that prevents an uninfected person from contracting the disease.

Amazing: An *antidote* that completely cures the disease in an infected patient.

Complications

Remember that the "bugs" in an alien invader vaccine may be big bugs indeed! While the PCs are working with – and, dare we hope, fighting monsters around – all their dangerous, fragile, virus-covered equipment, the GM can work with *Contagion* (p. B443) and *Infection* (p. B444), especially if an afflicted PC could turn into a horror himself. Even if all goes well, the GM should feel free to vary the cure's effectiveness, onset time, and other parameters as dramatic tension requires.

NOSFERATU: THE PLAGUE VAMPIRE

There's a type of vampire – the *nosferatu* – that bears no resemblance to Dracula. It's dead white, with long fingernails and rat-like teeth. It looks and smells awful; can turn to mist but not assume animal form; and summons rats, not wolves. When it sucks blood, there's nothing sexual or romantic about it; the victim wastes away and dies in agony. Like many vampires, the nosferatu symbolizes disease – a starkly medieval image, disgusting and evil. Where Dracula's aristocratic bearing and sexual charisma hint at syphilis, the nosferatu is the plague, tuberculosis, or perhaps typhus. Such creatures are the "walking pestilence," sapping strength and life, and then spreading through the land by transforming their victims into their likeness.

This older image can suggest more scenario ideas: A plague has struck the town, and a mysterious figure has been seen at night – coming up from the sewers, some say. A reward has been offered to anyone who can stop the Bringer of the Black Death. Investigators who work to find the meaning behind the monster can find ways of dealing with it. For example, a vampire's aversion to garlic is due to the bulb's nourishing, healing qualities; his fear of running water stems from the fact that it is generally considered clean and cleans that which enters it. Perhaps salt, sunlight, and other traditional purifiers can also stop the fiend!

The GM can use a monster's meaning to rework its appearance into a more appropriate and interesting form. In an American Civil War setting, the nosferatu might be accompanied not by rats, but by the pigs that fed on the bodies of dead soldiers. In a post-nuclear war setting, such a vampire may bring an army of cockroaches, glowing green at night.

> *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*
>
> *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*
>
> *– Medieval talisman, from Psalm 91:5-6*

Nosferatu

43 points

Advantages: Allies (Rat swarm; Built on 25%; 12 or less; Summonable, +100%) [24]; Claws (Talons) [8]; Pestilent (p. 22) [1]; Speak With Animals (Specialized, Rats, -80%) [5]; Vampire (p. B262) [150].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bad Smell [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dread (Salt) [-10]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Lifebane [-10]; No Alternate Forms [-30]; No Dominance [-20]; No Speak With Animals (Specialized, Wolves and Bats, -60%) [-10]; Vulnerability (Impaling Wood to Heart ×2) [-10].

Features: Achilles' Heel includes fire as well as wood.

Variations

For a nosferatu embodying a plague spirit, add Plague (p. 16).

Fear of Technology

We fear technology, even as we make more and more of it – even as we depend upon it for our very lives. William Blake called the first factories of the Industrial Revolution the "dark Satanic Mills," and that epithet has stuck ever since. Technology destroys nature – not just green fields and blue skies, but *human* nature. We become slaves to the machines we labor to build, our souls tainted with oil and rust when we sell them for a new car.

The Android

And some machines don't want our souls – they don't have them, and they don't need them. They want our lives. Perhaps they just wait to replace us. Perhaps they try to grab what little humanity we have left in their shadow: love, hate, and revenge. The Golem of Prague, Frankenstein's Monster, and Karel Čapek's titular "robots" are the first icons in a long series of manufactured men who attempt to supplant their creators' laws. We shouldn't be surprised when androids rebel against their maker – after all, that's what *we* did.

Androids are technological werewolves – inhuman killers in human skin. If there are enough of them, they're also Unseelie (pp. 82-83). But there are two specific keys to their horror. First, *we* built them; they are our species' death wish given metal shape. The second is their sheer implacability: They cannot be bargained with or bought off; they need only wait out their mortal rivals and they'll replace us. Of course, some of them can't wait that long.

Android

637 points

This is a standard "infiltrator" android, with a metal endoskeleton (Hardened DR 20) beneath lifelike pseudoflesh (Ablative DR 30). It uses its Computer Brain advantage to perform its day-to-day human tasks, occasionally slotting in skills like Observation or Shadowing as needed. The Payload is for smuggling guns, explosives, or anything else past the unobservant meat.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+15 [150]; DX+3 [60]; HT+3 [30].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10].
Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; AI [32]; Ambidexterity [5]; Computer Brain 2 (4, 4) [44]; DR 30 (Ablative, -80%) [30]; DR 20 (Hardened 2, +40%) [140]; Detect (Radio; Signal Detection, +0%) [5]; Discriminatory Hearing [15]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 12) [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Hyperspectral Vision [25]; Machine [25]; Parabolic Hearing 2 [8]; Payload 2 [2]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Radio (Video, +40%) [14]; Sealed [15]; Single-Minded [5]; Telescopic Vision 1 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 15 (-40°F to 210°F) [15]; Ultrahearing [5]; Unfazeable [15]; Vacuum Support [5].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous; Accessibility, Only when ablative DR is reduced by half, -40%) [-12]; Callous [-5]; Clueless [-10]; Electrical [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Killjoy [-15]; Maintenance (1 person; Biweekly) [-3]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Supernatural Features (No Pulse) [-5].
Quirks: Cannot Float [-1]; Frightens Dogs [-1]; Incompetence (Swimming) [-1].

Variations

An even more devious infiltrator would add Elastic Skin and the Disguise skill.

Killer Android: This model is optimized for killing things . . . people, mostly. *Stats:* Android [637]; add Combat Reflexes [15], Enhanced Tracking 1 [5], Extra Attack 1 [25], Gunslinger [25], Ladar (Reduced Range, ×1/2, -10%; Targeting Only, -40%) [10], and Silence 1 [5]; and buy a hardwired combat skill set consisting of Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15, Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+3 [8]-16, Knife (E) DX+3 [8]-16, and Neck Snap (H) ST [5]-25. *747 points.*

The Evil Computer

Evil computers can be demons (malevolent intelligences usurping the material world) or haunts (animating spirits controlling a Bad Place). Colossus, the massive defense computer that decided to take over the world's military in *Colossus: The Forbin Project,* typifies the first kind. HAL 9000, from *2001: A Space Odyssey,* turned a spaceship into a technological haunted house. Both were born in the 1960s, when society started to grow uncomfortable with the number of decisions left to computers. Forty years later, we've wired the whole world into the biggest haunted house ever.

Evil Computer (AI)

365 points

This is an evil computer *mind* – intelligent software. Its Unkillable advantage acts as unlimited levels of Extra Life with Copy and Requires Body. Should its current hardware be destroyed, a backup copy will come to life on some remote machine. To prevent this, the heroes must locate and destroy the lurking backup or its computer, or use a computer virus.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ+3 [60].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+4 [20].
Advantages: AI [32]; Computer Brain 1 (8) [38]; Enhanced Time Sense [45]; Mathematical Ability 2 [20]; Mimicry [10]; Mind Control (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Puppet, -40%) [10]; Mind Reading (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Telecommunication, -20%) [9]; Possession (Chronic, +20%; Digital, -40%; Full Memory Access, +10%) [90]; Unaging (Accessibility, IQ Only, -75%) [4]; Unkillable 3 (Achilles' Heel, Computer Virus, -30%; Copy, -20%; Requires Body, -20%) [45]; Visualization (Reliable 4, +20%) [12].
Disadvantages: Low Empathy [-20]; Megalomania [-10]; Secret (Sapient) [-20].
Racial Talent: +4 to Computer Hacking, Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Cryptography, Expert Skill (Computer Security), and Research [20].

Evil Computer (Hardware)

65 points

This is a huge "macroframe" in a hard case, wired into the world such that it enjoys remote senses and long-distance communication, letting the AI abuse its Mimicry, Mind Control, Mind Reading, Possession, etc. Other "shells" – like spaceships – would have different stats. For the evil computer's current abilities, *combine* AI and hardware traits.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-10 [-100]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +4; HP+65 (Size, -40%) [78].

Advantages: Clairsentience (Accessibility, Hearing and Vision Only, -5%; Accessibility, Only where computer pickups exist, -20%; Increased Range 19, +190%; Visible, Cameras, -10%) [128]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; DR 5 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Machine [25]; Sealed [15]; Telesend (Accessibility, Requires *some* sort of cable, radio link, telephone line, etc., -10%; Broadcast, +50%; Universal, +50%; Video, +40%) [69].

Disadvantages: Electrical [-20]; Increased Consumption 4 (30 minutes endurance if detached from power) [-40]; No Depth Perception [-15]; No Legs (Sessile) [-50]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Numb [-20]; Restricted Diet (Electricity; Very Common) [-10].

Variations

Both templates assume a wired, TL8+ world. A *Forbin Project*-style 1960s "mad defense computer" would predate the Internet, so Clairsentience, Mind Control, Mind Reading, Possession, Telesend, and Unkillable would be restricted to a handful of other computers hard-wired to it, if present at all. It would also fill a basement or a warehouse (double HP for each +2 to SM), not merely a medium-sized room. However, it would enjoy lots of military-industrial Allies, Security Clearance, and high Military Rank.

An evil computer could have many Allies (with Minion), some of them Puppets, that represent robots – or Duplication (Digital) to go with Possession (Digital), allowing the AI to run in two places at once. Or it might merely operate technical gear, weapons, and so forth with its Computer Operation skill. A computer-controlled building or spaceship may well be deadly to the inhabitants even *without* buying various life-support, sensor, and security systems as Affliction, Detect, Innate Attack, etc.

Logically, a computer would have extreme levels of Compartmentalized Mind and Extra Attack. Fortunately, that doesn't seem to happen in the movies.

Fear of the State

The state can draft you into indentured servitude. The state can impoverish you. The state can imprison you. The state can destroy your reputation, ruin your livelihood, and estrange you from your family. The state can send you into exile. The state can kill you – or make you disappear forever.

What prevents the state from doing those things? The laws.

Sometimes.

> *I think we're property.*
>
> *– Charles Fort,* ***The Book of the Damned***

The Men In Black

When the state ignores its own laws, it cannot use its normal servants. It must send out servitors who don't exist, who have no identities. They're legally undead, and they fear nothing except their invisible masters.

In 1953, ufologist Albert Bender suddenly closed down his flying saucer bureau, saying he did this on "orders from a higher source." His chief investigator, Gray Barker, knew who to blame: the Men In Black (MIBs) who had visited Bender. The UFO mythology now had its own devils, figures that soon intertwined themselves in all sorts of conspiratorial lore. Drawing equally on malevolent Unseelie (pp. 82-84) traditions and the real-life examples of the Gestapo and KGB, the Men In Black came to represent the state as necromancer, summoning demons to do its bidding. But unlike Faust, the state doesn't seek to learn forbidden knowledge – it seeks to cover it up.

Man In Black

666 points

Men In Black aren't traditionally assassins. Their combat skills are best hinted at rather than spelled out. But killing one MIB only brings two or three more to pay calls – backed up this time by *very* lethal SWAT or counterterrorism troopers.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; DX+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10]; Will+3 [15]; Per+3 [15].

Advantages: Administrative Rank 6 [30]; Allies (Squad of elite soldiers or police; Built on 75%; 12 or less; Summonable, +100%) [72]; Alternate Identity (Legal) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Empathy [15]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Indomitable [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers [15]; Legal Immunity [15]; Memory Wipe Gizmo (p. 13) [98]; Military Rank 6 [30]; Patron (The Agency; 15 or less; Special Abilities, +50%) [113]; Police Rank 6 [30]; Recovery [10]; Security Clearance [15]; Serendipity 2 [30]; Unfazeable [15]; Zeroed [10].

Disadvantages: Callous [-5]; Duty (The Agency; 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Intolerance (Enemies of the state) [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5].
Quirks: Speaks in monotone [-1]; Wears black [-1].
Skills: Intimidation (A) Will+2 [4]-15*; Judo (H) DX+1 [8]-13; Shadowing (A) IQ+3 [12]-13.
Techniques: Arm Lock (A) Judo+4 [4]-17; Choke Hold (H) Judo [3]-13.

* Includes +1 from Callous.

Variations

Men In Black enjoy black-government surveillance packages that approach global Clairsentience (as for an evil computer, pp. 88-89), but generally must return to their unmarked van or innocuous-looking downtown building to access them. They also have plenty of equipment, often a TL higher than the campaign default: miniature scrambled radio headsets, unobvious personal body armor, and untraceable silenced side arms, for starters. Their ubiquitous black sunglasses might grant Hyperspectral Vision – or Dark Vision, in cinematic or openly supernatural versions. In addition to their late-model domestic black automobile, MIBs may travel by stealthy black helicopter, reverse-engineered flying saucer, or even more exotic means. Paranormal MIBs will possess the power described in *The State* (pp. 32-33).

Agent: An actual, mostly realistic government agent. *Stats:* Detective (p. 37) [80]; add ST+2 [20], DX+2 [40], HT+2 [20], Will+2 [10], Allies (Squad of elite soldiers or police; Built on 75%; 9 or less; Summonable, +100%) [36], Alternate Identity (Legal) [5], Callous [-5], Combat Reflexes [15], Duty (The Bureau, 15 or less) [-15], Legal Enforcement Powers [15], Legal Immunity [15], Patron (The Bureau; 12 or less) [40], Police Rank 2 [10], and Security Clearance [10]; and buy quirks, skills, and techniques as MIB [29]. *325 points.*

Mandroid: In UFO lore, eyewitness descriptions of MIBs suggest robots or artificial life forms rather than harassed civil servants. They wipe minds by making eye contact and repeating the screen memory in a monotone: "You saw the planet Venus." *Stats:* ST+2 [20]; DX+2 [40]; HT+2 [20]; HP+5 [10]; Automaton [-85]; Callous [-5]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [15]; Legal Immunity [15]; Machine [25]; Memory Wipe Mantra (p. 13) [70]; Recovery [10]; Supernatural Features (Rugose Skin) [-10]; Unfazeable [15]; Zeroed [10]; and quirks, skills, and techniques as MIB [29]. *209 points.*

Tulpa: One theory holds that MIBs are tulpas (p. 81) created by omnipresent government scrutiny, mass paranoia, or UFO witnesses' guilty conscience. To suit MIB lore, this tulpa variant has a material-but-still-eerie form. *Stats:* Mature Tulpa (p. 81) [244]; add 360° Vision [25], Callous [-5], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Duplication 2 (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%) [67], Empathy [15], Ghostly Movement (p. 20) [30], Hard to Kill 2 [4], High Pain Threshold [10], Indomitable [15], Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40], Memory Wipe 3 (p. 12) [114], Mindlink (Duplicates) [10], Recovery [10], Telesend (Telepathic, -10%) [27], and Zeroed [10]; remove Cannot Speak, Insubstantiality, Invisibility, and Telekinesis; change Maintenance to (Paranoia; 1 person; Weekly) [-5], Supernatural Features to (Inhuman Calm) [-5], and Vulnerability to (Any attack by legitimate authority ×4) [-40]; specify compulsion as Obsession (Protect the state's secrets); and buy quirks, skills, and techniques as MIB [29]. *492 points.*

Fear of Death

In the long run, we're all dead. All fears – and all hopes, and all dreams – lead to the grave. In its gaping emptiness, we see nothing but worms, smell nothing but decay. It will come for us all, ready or not. Sometimes it comes early – but it may be even more fearsome when it comes too late.

The Zombie

Zombies are corpses animated by powerful magic (e.g., the Zombie spell, p. B252), usually under the control of their creator, if any. Zombie flesh is dead flesh, running the gamut from corpselike pallor, through greenish discoloration, to ongoing rot and decay (although if nothing remains but bones, it isn't a zombie but a skeleton; see p. 27). Zombies are usually human, but not always – a faithful family pet returning from the dead to terrorize his former masters is a zombie, too.

Zombies may use any weapon from a tire iron to a .45 automatic, but they're much more effective with melee weapons than with guns, as they seldom remember to aim or reload. A zombie follows the verbal orders of its creator or anyone that person commands it to obey. Zombies can also be given simple "programming": "Attack anyone other than me who enters this room, and keep attacking until they leave." If a programmed zombie's creator dies or never comes back, the zombie will stand, eternally vigilant, ready to execute its orders.

Zombie

-111 points

Zombies feel no pain, are never stunned, and don't suffer skill penalties from wounds. One that has a limb crippled in combat will fight on, dragging itself along the ground if necessary. A missing foot reduces Move by 1; a missing leg or *two* missing feet lowers Move by 3; legless, a zombie with at least one good arm pulls itself along at Move 1.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; IQ-2 [-40].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10].
Advantages: Doesn't Sleep [20]; Rotting Undead (p. 27) [59]; Single-Minded [5]; Unfazeable [15].
Disadvantages: Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Zombie Mobs

Some horrors – zombies, angry villagers, Deep Ones, etc. – strike in sizeable *hordes.* Gaming out combats involving many generic hostiles can be difficult and time-consuming. These optional rules show how to handle them as swarms (see *Swarm Attacks,* p. B461).

A swarm of SM 0 opponents, or *mob,* has three identical members per hex on a battle map. Move and DR are as given for the component creatures. The same goes for damage – but unlike swarms of smaller monsters, mobs deliver discrete attacks, not aggregate damage. Use *Rapid Fire* (p. B373) to resolve how many blows hit. A mob's melee attacks have Rcl 1 for this purpose.

Mobs can also grapple. Treat ST as 40% higher than the members' individual ST score for pins, takedowns, etc. This yields results identical to *Multiple Close Combat* (p. B392). Only one mob can grapple a man-sized target at a time.

Mobs are attacked normally. Treat them as a single creature for this purpose. They may attempt any active defense, although most horror mobs All-Out Attack. Especially skilled heroes might wish to use multiple attacks to decimate a mob; see *One-Man Armies* in ***GURPS Supers***.

A mob isn't automatically Diffuse. Use the usual wounding rules for the base template; e.g., humans are harmed normally, zombies are Unliving, and evil trees are Homogenous. The mob's HP equal 60% of its constituents' *total* HP. After suffering this much injury or more, the mob dissipates: some of them have gone down with major wounds, or are stunned, confused, tangled in each other's bodies, or otherwise unable to fight effectively as a mob. If the PCs continue to attack a dissipated mob, its members may fight back as individual combatants!

Some mobs re-form; e.g., a 12-hex zombie horde will eventually rally from even total dispersal as an eight-hex horde. Creatures with Regeneration, Unkillable, or the like may come back in full. Angry villagers might never return, depending on morale and leadership.

Example 1: A one-hex mob of generic humans (all attributes 10) has Move 5, ST 10 (ST 14 grappling), and a RoF 3 attack doing 1d-3 crushing damage at skill 10 – punches! It has DR 0 and takes 18 HP to disperse.

Example 2: A three-hex mob of slow B-movie zombies (below) has Move 2, ST 11 (ST 15 grappling), and a RoF 9 attack doing 1d-2 crushing with Infectious Attack. They suffer less injury from piercing and impaling wounds (p. B380), but ×4 injury from head shots. The mob has DR 0 and takes 87 HP to disperse!

Features: Affected by Control Zombie and Turn Zombie; Neither has nor can spend FP; No mental skills.

Variations

The movies offer two major zombie subclasses: the classic "slow zombie," as seen in *White Zombie* and *Night of the Living Dead,* and the new (and controversial) "fast zombie," from *28 Days Later* and *Resident Evil.* The following lenses are applicable to the above template and to any of the versions below:

Fast Zombie: Basic Speed+2 [40]. *+40 points.*

Slow Zombie: Basic Speed-1 [-20]; Basic Move-1 [-5]. *-25 points.*

Fantasy-styled zombies differ yet again; see ***GURPS Magic.***

B-Movie Zombies

In the B-movie world, certain contaminants – from chemical spills, to cometary radiation, to strange diseases – can animate corpses, turning them into the walking dead. Some even transform *living* humans into zombies. Such creatures are customarily characterized by a ravenous appetite for human flesh (especially brains!), and may be difficult to dispose of without dispersing the contaminants over an even wider range. Given their hunger, and the fact that they often emerge from graveyards, these zombies can be seen as yet another type of ghoul (pp. 59-60), this variety melding fear of taint with fear of death and mutilation. "Slow zombies," especially, also evoke the fear of disease, implacable and inevitable.

B-Movie Zombie: Zombie [-111]; add DX-1 [-20], Dependency (Human flesh or brains; Illegal; Daily) [-45], Dread (Daylight) [-30], Dread (Fire) [-20], Gluttony (6) [-10], Independent Body Parts (No Reattachment, -60%) [14], Infectious Attack [-5], Uncontrollable Appetite (6) (Human Brains) [-30], and Vulnerability (Head Shots ×4) [-60]; and remove Doesn't Eat or Drink. *-327 points.*

Voodoo Zombies

Voudun sorcerers (*bokors*) turn living people into zombies (*zombis*) by administering a ritual preparation containing the contact poison tetrodotoxin. The ingredients vary: puffer fish, certain amphibians, and a variety of plants found in Haiti are all possibilities. Haitian zombies can traditionally be laid to rest by tasting salt or (sometimes) by the sight of the sea; as well, a powerful magician or priest can return a zombie to normal life. These zombies are a monster of a culture born in forced labor, so the fear isn't of being attacked by one but of *becoming* one – a senseless, mindless, unfeeling slave for eternity.

In historical horror campaigns, evil landowners might have zombie workers and servants, and local people may guard relatives' graves at night in case a "death" wasn't natural but caused by zombie poison. In more modern times, becoming a zombie is the ultimate punishment for social transgressions. It could happen to anyone, from a violent criminal to an overly inquisitive anthropologist.

Undead Voodoo Zombie: Zombie [-111]; add Reduced Consumption 2 [4], Vulnerability (Salt ×4) [-40], and Weakness (Salt; 1d/minute) [-20]; remove Doesn't Eat or Drink, Injury Tolerance (No Blood), and Unhealing; and modify Doesn't Breathe with Oxygen Storage, 25×, -50%. *-162 points.*

Zombified Human: DX-2 [-40]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT-2 [-20]; FP+2 [6]; Basic Move-1 [-5]; Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Delusion ("I'm dead") [-15]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Reduced Consumption 2 [4]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2]; Unfazeable [15]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25]; and the quirk "Body odor" [-1]. *-232 points.*

The Mummy

Mummies are corpses that have been embalmed (or dehydrated naturally by dry, thin air) and somehow reanimated. Cultures from the Inca, to T'ang Dynasty China, to the medieval Aragonese practiced mummification. However, the most common mummies – in both horror and the real world – are those of ancient Egypt. Ancient Egyptian religion required preservation of the physical body for as long as possible. Intentional mummification began in Egypt as early as 2600 B.C., although the desiccating effect of the sand in which they were buried naturally preserved some bodies from earlier periods. Mummies are usually reanimated by magic or the power of the gods; eldritch *tana* leaves or other mystical ingredients can also revive and sustain them.

The preserved corpses of pharaohs are the best-known mummies, but certainly not the only type. Women, high priests, viziers, and work crew "foremen" – in fact, anyone with money and power – could be mummified. Moreover, the Egyptians mummified all sorts of animals: birds, cats, wolves, horses, dogs, and even fish, snakes, and crocodiles. Imagine a scenario in which the Grand Vizier, upon revivification, raises an army of herons or cobras to do his bidding!

A mummy rarely attacks frontally, preferring to "play dead" in order to ambush pesky mortals. Its favorite tactic is to strangle (p. B370) from behind until its victim dies; Strangle Hold (p. 30) makes this a snap. Investigators battling mummies should also note that these undead are quite combustible thanks to their dry wrappings (and sometimes due to embalming resins).

Mummies' tombs are often repositories of fabulous riches and of equally immense archaeological knowledge. The downside is that mummies are usually driven by their creators or by their own maniacal will to exact a horrible revenge upon anyone who defiles their grave. A rare few *aren't* controlled by other entities – they're powerful wizards who've cheated death by taking the undying mummy-form themselves. Such beings are independent, malevolent, and highly intelligent, and typically served by lesser zombies of many types. They may wish only to be left alone, to search tirelessly for their reincarnated bride, or to send their minions hunting for the Perfect New Body . . .

The Mummy's Curse

The mummy of King Tutankhamun purportedly carried a powerful curse: "Death will come on swift wings to him that toucheth the tomb of the Pharaoh." The death (by infected mosquito bite!) the following year of Lord Carnarvon, one of the sponsors of the Tut excavation, gave credence to the story. To replicate such effects, mummies might have Pestilence (pp. 15-16), an army of creatively vengeful cultist minions, or (for mummified wizards) the following spell.

Mummy's Curse

Melee; Special Resistance

The caster *must* touch the subject. On a successful touch, the subject must roll vs. HT, with failure meaning he acquires the Curse. There's no immediate effect, but the victim must roll against HT once per week; each failure inflicts 1 HP of injury. If the victim ever reaches 0 HP, he'll fall into a coma and look very much like a mummy himself. Eventually, unless help is found, he'll die – but his body won't decay. While he won't automatically rise as a mummy, the Zombie spell (p. B252) works at +4 on his corpse.

Mummy's Curse *always* has a cure, which the GM should keep secret. It may be a spell (such as Remove Curse), an elixir, or a rare herb. Different versions of this spell might exist, each with a different cure. No one may be affected by more than one Mummy's Curse at a time.

Duration: Permanent until cured.
Cost: 3.
Prerequisites: Curse and Pestilence. The wizard must also be a mummy.

Mummy

80 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 [100].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10]; Basic Move-1 [-5].
Advantages: Doesn't Sleep [20]; Indomitable [15]; Mummified Undead (p. 27) [80]; Unfazeable [15]; Unkillable 2 (Achilles' Heel, Fire, -50%) [50].
Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (12) (Remain in and guard tomb; kill abductors and return if forcibly removed from tomb) [-15]; Dependency (Funerary Amulet; Constantly) [-150]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Unhealing (Total) [-30].

Variations

These stats assume that the mummy draws its power and unlife from some kind of amulet; e.g., a papyrus scroll, a magical gem, or a canopic jar containing its preserved heart. To adapt this template to undead without such talismans, remove Dependency and Unkillable. Medieval Buddhists in China, Tibet, and Vietnam covered their mummies in many layers of lacquer; this might afford as much as DR 5, which enemies using flame attacks must pierce for Fragile (Combustible) to take effect.

Cinematic – and some novelistic – mummies have Obsession (Search for reincarnated true love). Mummified high priests have Magery or Power Investiture (and possibly Blessed), along with many culturally specific spells; see ***GURPS Egypt*** or another appropriate historical worldbook.

For little ones, Mormo brought fear . . .

– Erinna, "The Distaff" (c. 600 B.C.)

The Lilitu

What's worse than dying? The death of your children. Your hope for immortality, for a life beyond life – gone.

The *lilitu* are the first monsters on record, probably entering Akkadian and Assyrian myth from even older Sumerian lore. Their name comes from either the Akkadian *lili* ("night") or the Sumerian *lil* ("wind") – the lilitu are flying horrors that bring death by night. In its earliest form, the lilitu had a raptor's wings and talons, sometimes a lion's body, and sometimes a scorpion's tail. In all incarnations, she kills infants in the crib: by suffocation, by poison, or by fever.

In Talmudic lore, she became "Lilith," the arrogant first wife of Adam, cursed by God and queen of the witches. Many neighboring cultures – and some non-neighboring ones, like the Basques and the Malays – developed their own versions of the lilitu, either after Mesopotamian contact or because the fear of child loss is universal. Or because lilitu *exist* . . .

Lilitu

461 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; DX+4 [80]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+3 [6]; Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Affliction 2 (Accessibility, Only on very young infants, -50%; Affects Substantial, +40%; Choking, +100%; Link, +10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [29]; Alternate Form (Screech Owl) [15]; Claws (Talons) [8]; Dark Vision [25]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Leech 2 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Accessibility, Only on very young infants, -50%; Affects Substantial, +40%; Link, +10%) [37]; Specter (p. 27) [279].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Dependency (Infants' Breath; Illegal; Daily) [-45]; Dread (Pazuzu Amulets) [-10]; No Doesn't Eat or Drink [-10]; Nocturnal [-20]; Odious Racial Habit (Killing babies) [-15].

Features: Barren; Cannot give milk.

Variations

This template emphasizes the lilitu's infanticidal aspects, but she rapidly deviated from this depiction and absorbed other myths' monsters. In some stories, she's leonine rather than avian; in others, she's a winged succubus (p. 66) who literally "does things your wife won't." In later tales, she has much in common with the ghul (p. 60), and haunts the same deserts. Thus, one can remain "authentic" while freely mixing and matching the traits of lilitu, succubi, and the many variants below.

Either of these lenses might apply to the template:

Material Lilitu: Any lilitu might be material rather than a spirit. *Stats:* Replace Specter with Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Switchable, +10%; Visible Shadow, -10%) [36], and Unaging [15]; remove No Doesn't Eat or Drink; and remove Affects Substantial enhancement from Affliction and Leech. *-188 points.*

Wings Only: In some reliefs, lilitu have only wings and no arms. *Stats:* Add No Fine Manipulators [-30] and modify DX bonus with No Fine Manipulators, -40%. *-62 points.*

Variant templates include:

Ardat-Lili: From an Akkadian word for "prostitute," this version of the lilitu threatens young men. She cannot have normal sex, but instead induces ecstasy (p. B428) in victims she drains. *Stats:* Lilitu [461]; add Affliction 3 (Accessibility, Only on men, -20%; Based on Will, +20%; Contact Agent, -30%; Ecstasy, +100%; Link, +10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, No Parry, -35%; Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [38], Alternate Form (Beautiful Woman) [15], Dependency (Sexual Energy; Nightly) [-30], Lecherousness (6) [-30], Social Stigma (Evil Spirit) [-15], and Supernatural Features (Owl's Feet; Accessibility, Only in woman form, -10%) [-9]; remove Affliction 2, Dependency (Infant's Breath), and Odious Racial Habit; and change Leech to Leech 2 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Accessibility, Only on men, -20%; Link, +10%) [34]. *458 points.*

Cihuateteo: The Aztecs had their own infanticidal vampires – spirits of women who died in childbirth and in revenge killed children and young women. Even today, they stalk crossroads in Mexico on unlucky nights. *Stats:* Lilitu [461]; add Alternate Form (Rattlesnake) [15], Intolerance (Childbearing women) [-5], Paralyzing Touch (p. 12) [26], Supernatural Features (Pallor) [-10], Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Blood) [-15], Vampiric Bite [30], Vulnerability (Fire ×3) [-45], Vulnerability (Impaling to heart ×4) [-40], and Weakness (Sunlight; 1d/minute) [-60]; remove Dependency, Dread, and Nocturnal; increase ST bonus to +7; modify Insubstantiality with Reversion, +60% (p. 16); and remove Winged from Flight. *540 points.*

Classical Lamia: The original child-killing, serpentine ogress of Greek myth – not the similarly named Romantic creature (see *Romantic Vampire,* pp. 65-66). Cursed by Hera with childlessness and the inability to close her eyes, Zeus granted her the ability to replace her eyes with those she stole. Hellenistic and later lamiae shared the ardat-lili's ability to assume pleasing female form, along with a vampiric bite. *Stats:* Serpent-Folk (p. 84) [108]; add ST+10 [100], Appearance (Monstrous) [-20], Chronic Pain (Severe; 4 hours; 6 or less; Mitigator, Newly stolen eyes, Monthly, -70%) [-2], Divine Curse (Childless and cannot close eyes) [-15], Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Intolerance (Childbearing women) [-5], Odious Racial Habit (Devours children) [-15], Social Stigma (Monster) [-15], Unaging [15], the perk "Can replace eyes with stolen ones" [1], and the feature No Legs (Slithers); remove Secret; and change Claws (Sharp) to Claws (Talons) [8]. *225 points.*

Lamashtu: An Akkadian demon like the lilitu, Lamashtu was a solitary winged-lioness figure, not a race. Rather than steal children's breath, she gave them poisoned milk in the night – not owing to dependency or need, but merely out of cruelty. In some versions, she also poisons those with whom she has sex. *Stats:* Lilitu [461]; add Fur [1], Lifebane [-10], Pestilence (pp. 15-16) [50], Sadism (6) [-30], and Toxic Attack 3d-1 (Blood Agent, -40%; Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Preparation required, 1 minute, -20%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 ST, DX, IQ, and HT, +90%) [16]; remove Affliction, Dependency, and Leech; and increase ST bonus to +10. *547 points.*

Strix: These shapeshifting witches from Roman legend (pl. *striges*) took bird form at night to vampirize children and young men. From them come the Romanian word for vampire, *stregoi,* and the Italian word for witch, *streghe. Stats:* Witch (p. 82) [150]; add Alternate Form (Screech Owl; Projected Form, -50%) [8], Speak With Animals (Specialized, Birds, -50%) [13], Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Blood) [-15], and Vampiric Bite (Accessibility, Bird form only, -10%) [27]; and remove Ally. *171 points.*

Fear of Apocalypse

Outside of isolated panics when the first millennium came around in 1000 A.D., most medieval millenarians (in both Christendom and Islam) reacted with ecstasy and fervor – admittedly, sometimes *murderous* ecstasy and fervor – whenever the Apocalypse seemed likely. Fear of the end of the world was merely epidemic, with fierce but brief outbreaks when a comet flashed or a charismatic mendicant appeared at the gate.

It took the modern era to turn fear of apocalypse into a chronic state. The end of the Cold War merely replaced a nuclear apocalypse with an environmental one. The Y2K panic featured the idiot-god computer, with humanity locked into an unwilling suicide pact. Population paranoia created its own zombies, the ever-hungry, all-consuming Others. Global warming nightmares married fear of technology to poisoning phobia with a soupçon of cosmic horror. But it all began with the Bomb.

The Daikaiju

Two movies kicked off the "atomic monster" trend: *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (United States, 1953) and *Gojira* (Japan, 1954). Both featured gigantic dinosaurs awakened by nuclear testing, combining fears of vengeful Nature and of technology gone amok, and both monsters spread contamination in their wake (a plague in one case, radiation in the other). While Hollywood picked up the theme and ran with it – starting with 1954's *Them!,* about giant atomic ants – it was the Japanese who turned a fad into an icon. *Gojira* and his heirs were *daikaiju,* "giant strange beasts." Daikaiju multiplied and mutated, spreading to other lands and taking on new symbolism. South Korea's *The Host* plays on fear of the state, while the fear of powerlessness writ large in the wake of 9/11 fuels *Cloverfield,* an American film blending fear of others and fear of the universe.

Stopping the Daikaiju

A daikaiju is the Apocalypse made flesh. It has ST and HP scores in the *thousands,* with similarly stratospheric DR, and unleashes immense damage from radioactive flame breath or something similar (e.g., a 21st-century daikaiju might emit smothering clouds of carbon dioxide). Even its footfall should be fatal; those not crushed instantly suffer sleets of radiation, or heart attacks from sheer terror. In short, no PC – at least, no *horror* PC – should have a chance of killing it in a fair fight. If the campaign features supers at that level, then bringing in a daikaiju may be the only way to instill horror, although you can't do this more than once or twice without descending into Toho Studios camp.

In the modern myth, there are only two ways to stop a true daikaiju (smaller *kaiju* can be killed as easily as any dragon): Summon another daikaiju to defeat it, or destroy it with a scientific super-weapon like the one that birthed it. Symbolically, these may be the same method, but in game terms they have their differences.

In the movies, the JDF can simply send out a call for Gojira when King Ghidorah is on the rampage; in a horror campaign, the heroes should have to work harder. Perhaps they must journey to Monster Island, fighting off kaiju or gill-men to reach their slumbering savior. Even finding another daikaiju may be difficult, requiring Research, Hidden Lore, Geography, or still more recondite skills and powers. Every false trail or excess combat means possible megadeaths at home; the GM should try to bring the sheer unthinking monstrosity of the daikaiju home to the players, the literal race against the end.

In most daikaiju stories, the military wants to use a Bigger Bomb to kill the monster, despite the near-certainty that such a blast would awaken even worse horrors. The heroes might have to talk the generals out of such hubris, or merely work against a known deadline. ("My sources say the Air Force will launch the cobalt bomb in 48 hours – we'd better have the oxygen destroyer working in 40.") Developing a plan to kill a daikaiju is much like defeating a disease (pp. 86-87) on a timeline of days instead of months. In short, it's a job for someone with the Gadgeteer advantage.

Meanwhile, the other PCs will have to acquire experimental parts, fight off panicked hordes, or save the inventor's girlfriend from a giant moth. The GM must not only balance everyone's skills and spotlight time, but also convey the possibility that even our heroes' invention might go amuck – anything powerful enough to stop the Apocalypse is powerful enough to *cause* it. If the players are willing to risk ending the world, then the GM should be, too. Act like you mean it!

Fear of Hell

So what comes after death? We don't know, but it scares us. The churches say that if we break the rules, we go to Hell – and we *all* know we break the rules. Hell isn't always willing to wait for us to get there, though. Sometimes, it comes here.

Hell is wrongness – moral, physical, and spiritual. Its inhabitants are our sins given form, made external and terrifying. In a way, they're the undercarriage of all our other monsters, which can also represent the great sins: vampires as lust or greed, werewolves and psycho killers as wrath, zombies as sloth, wendigo as gluttony, and daikaiju and androids as pride. Some are more specific sins; e.g., ghouls are cannibalism and lilitu are infanticide. Ghosts might embody any of these sins, and *all* undead sin against the laws of life and death. Fear of others might be hate or envy; fear of the universe is despair. What are monsters if not violations of natural law . . . and what is violating the law of Creation if not sin?

The Demon

The demons of horror fiction are quite different from those of fantasy (as depicted in ***GURPS Magic***, for instance). Fantasy demons are red-skinned, flame-clad giants with horns and wings. A horror demon *might* look like that, but chances are that you'll never see it. Demons in horror tales tend to spread their evil *subtly* on the mortal plane, usually through possessed humans. In most cases, a demon encountered in our world will be channeling its powers through a mortal victim's body. Horror demons put a lot of wear and tear on their "borrowed" living vessels!

Neither depiction is particularly true to the demons of medieval European lore, which were "airy spirits" that occasionally took physical form, often as black beasts. But every culture has its own demons, beings devoted essentially to evil – or at the very least, to messing with humans.

Demons might be servants of Hell or simply inhabitants of some horribly dangerous, unpleasant dimension. In fact, it may be that demons aren't physical beings even on their home plane, but are instead nothing more – or less – than pure, sentient evil. When they visit our world, they busy themselves by inflicting as much sorrow as possible on anyone they can. A few are openly violent, but most prefer to cause emotional pain, torturing the loved ones of their chosen victim.

Occasionally, a demon enters our world to breed with humans, producing human-looking children with demonic powers. Whether it must visit this plane in physical form to accomplish this is a topic of debate among occultists – some hold that any child conceived by a possessed individual will also have a demon's power. Nor is it clear what would happen to demon-spawn if they were exorcised. One widespread view is that such offspring have no human soul; however, there are experts who theorize that these children are normal humans, possessed before birth.

It may be that demons are incapable of bringing their physical form onto our plane of existence voluntarily, and can operate here *only* by possessing humans. Alternatively, perhaps some demons can and do physically enter our world under their own power. Occultists are divided on this, but agree that a (usually foolish) sorcerer who knows the appropriate spell can summon any demon here in its native shape.

"Be Thou Not Afraid"

Ever wonder why this is always the first thing an angel says in the Bible? It's because angels are pure-and-awful *terrifying.* They represent the power of God, undimmed by mercy or human feeling of any kind – pure, pitiless Good. This is the flipside of the fear of Hell: the fear that if God ever looked at you, He'd send you there in an instant.

The popular view of angels softened somewhat in the 19th century, with the cult of the "guardian angel," but horror drama still knows that they aren't human. Movies like *The Prophecy* and *Legion,* and (in its fourth and fifth season) the TV show *Supernatural,* depict at least some angels as eager exterminators of mankind, evoking fear of apocalypse. Even human-supporting angels in such stories tend more toward heavenly artillery strikes and old-school "Kill them all, God will know His own"-type attitudes. Most PCs have at least one "sinful" disadvantage; if they're paying attention, they should know that the angels are, too.

Build angels as demons but without any of the disadvantages; the aslai (p. 96) and tempter (p. 97) variations both make excellent nonstandard angel forms. While angels were usually Outsiders (p. 27) in medieval and Renaissance lore, they're more often Threshold Entities (p. 27) in modern myth. Add Flight (customarily Winged), *definitely* Terror (or Awe, from ***GURPS Powers***), and traditionally Broadsword. Most angels also have True Faith, plus Indomitable and/or Unfazeable – and the GM could justify almost any other advantage as well. Angelic disadvantages are few and far between, although Disciplines of Faith, Disturbing Voice, Fanaticism, and No Sense of Humor aren't uncommon. In some campaigns, angels might be restricted by "Enochian sigils" or spells equivalent to Pentagram.

Demon

201 points

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: FP+5 [15].

Advantages: Dark Vision [25]; Energy Reserve 5 (Infernal; Accessibility, Granted by demon lord, -40%) [9]; Indomitable [15]; Outsider (p. 27) [226]; Penetrating Voice [1].

Disadvantages: Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents; Accessibility, Prevents *direct* harm of *truly* good folk only, -50%) [-5]; Social Stigma (Demon) [-20]; Vulnerability (Blessed Weapons ×4) [-20]; Weakness (Holy Water; 1d/minute) [-20]. ● -25 points in "evil" mental disadvantages such as Bloodlust, Gluttony, Lecherousness, Sadism, and Selfish.

Features: Affected by Astral Block, Banish, Pentagram, Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals; Can be turned using True Faith.

Variations

Like most 16th-century and later European magicians – and the majority of modern horror fiction – this template assumes that demons are fundamentally Outsiders: beings who don't belong in our world and who so fundamentally damage reality that it takes great effort to keep them here. This *isn't* consistent with medieval Catholic theology or many other cultures' demon tales; to agree with those, substitute Threshold Entity (p. 27) for Outsider, making template cost 202 points. Another option is to replace Outsider with the Body of Air meta-trait (p. B262) and Alternate Form (Materialized Demon), the cost of which depends on the material form.

In whatever shape, demons possess any number of horrific traits. They'll likely have Appearance (Monstrous); some form of dangerous body weaponry, from goat horns to barbed tails; DR from fur or chitin; and hellish Afflictions or Innate Attacks. Some might be capable of Flight (with or without wings) or even Warp. Most can return to Hell at will, which is either Jumper (Spirit) with Limited Access or merely a special effect of revoking – or losing – their "summoned" status on Earth. Many enjoy Magery, or even Power Investiture granted by arch-demons, evil gods, or Satan! Demons seem to attract bureaucracy; China, medieval Europe, and India all have dizzyingly complex demonic hierarchies. Thus, a demon may owe a Duty to some (likely unforgiving) superior.

Depending on the cosmology, demons might have Dreads (garlic, holly, neem leaves, consecrated ground, fireworks, mirrors, salt, etc.) and/or Vulnerabilities (silver, ash-wood, hawthorn, or iron – "cold" or otherwise). The sound of church bells or cock-crow may be a Weakness, or the demon might merely be under a Divine Curse to return to Hell when it hears them. The basic template takes a minimalist approach to such things not because it makes better gaming (just the opposite), but because the possibilities are so numerous that it would be a shame to lock in only one or two.

Demons may grow stronger in certain areas (e.g., desecrated churches or serial-killing sites), in the presence of certain materials (like sacrificed blood), or even in spots that replicate Hellish geometries! The suggestions under *Feeding Ghosts* (pp. 77-78) suit demons, too. The other major possibility for a demonic Energy Reserve is Accessibility, Only at unholy times or places (-40%).

Like ghosts, demons vary in power:

Favored Demon: ST+1 [10]; Will+2 [10]; Per+1 [5]; improve FP bonus to +11 [33], for 18 points; and improve ER to ER 15 (Infernal; Accessibility, Granted by demon lord, -40%) [27], for 18 points. *+61 points.*

Greater Demon: ST+3 [30]; Will+4 [20]; Per+2 [10]; improve FP bonus to +17 [51], for 36 points; and improve ER to ER 33 (Infernal; Accessibility, Granted by demon lord, -40%) [60], for 51 points. *+147 points.*

Arch-Demon: ST+9 [90]; Will+8 [40]; Per+4 [20]; improve FP bonus to +23 [69], for 54 points; and improve ER to ER 66 (Infernal; Accessibility, Granted by demon lord, -40%) [119], for 110 points. *+314 points.*

The many specific variations include:

Aslai: The general term in Moroccan folklore for a demon that possesses people, usually causing madness or social chaos. *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+4 (Accessibility, Only on possessed form, -40%) [24] and Possession (Spiritual, -20%) [80]. *305 points.*

Devil-Beast: This animal is almost always black and freakishly large, with fiery red eyes. It's sent from Hell to torment some evil person (usually the summoner who allowed it to continue appearing), or his heirs, or whoever happens to walk along the yew alley in the new moon. It can drag grappled or unconscious victims to Hell. This template is for a devil-dog (also called a Gabriel Ratchet, Hellhound, or Black Shuck), but with adjusted attributes can serve for devil-horses (Hellmounts), fiendish hogs, devil-crows, etc. Such creatures have only Terror 3 without the howl. Some devil-beasts leave fiery or glowing footprints before materializing – a special effect. *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+6 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [36], DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24], IQ-2 [-40], HT+2 [20], Will+4 [20], Per+2 [10], Basic Move+3 [15], Acute Tate and Smell 4 [8], Burning Attack 3d+3 (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 3 FP, -15%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [33], Cannot Speak [-15], Claws (Blunt) [3], Detect (Sinfulness) [10], Discriminatory Smell [15], Divine Curse (Must return to Hell at cock-crow) [-10], Dread (Religious Symbols; 3 yards) [-12], ER 15 (Infernal; Accessibility, Only at unholy times or places, -40%) [27], Fur [1], Jumper (Spirit; Extra Carrying Capacity, Heavy, +30%; Limited Access, Hell, -20%; Limited Use, Once per night, -40%) [70], Quadruped [-35], Regeneration (Very Fast; Accessibility, Only at specific cursed site, -80%; Fatigue Only, -0%) [20], Teeth (Sharp) [1], and Terror 7 (Howl; -6 to Fright Checks; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%) [81]; and modify Insubstantiality with Reversion, +60% (p. 16). *531 points.*

Ngojama: Sorcerers from Kenya and neighboring regions summon these long-armed lion-gorilla hybrid demons as assassins. They have iron spikes and fanged mouths in the palms of their hands; when the spike sticks in the target (see *Picks,* p. B405), the mouth chews away until the victim pulls free! *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+4 [40], DX+3 [60], Will+4 [20], Bad Grip 3 (Accessibility, Not Climbing, -10%) [-14], Berserk (9) [-15], Cutting Attack 1d-1 (Cyclic, 1 second, 5 cycles, +400%; Follow-Up, Impaling Attack, +0%; No Blunt Trauma, -20%; No Knockback, -10%) [24], DR 3 [15], DR 5 (Absorption, +100%; Limited, Energy, -20%) [45],

Dread (Water) [-30], Extra Mouth 2 [10], Impaling Attack 2d+1 (Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%) [16], Teeth (Sharp) [1], Threshold Entity (p. 27) [227], and the quirk "Sweet tooth" [-1]; remove Outsider; modify Insubstantiality with Always On, -50% and Always On becomes Usually On (Only if Summoned, -40%), +6%; and buy Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-15. *346 points*.

Oni: These Japanese demons materialize in the form of hideous, 8'-tall ogres with red or blue skin, horns, bulging eyes, and tusks. They typically wear skins – or nothing – and favor large clubs. *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+10 [100], DX+1 [20], HT+5 [50], HP+10 [20], Appearance (Monstrous) [-20], Claws (Talons) [8], Dread (Holy Symbols) [-10], Gullibility (12) [-10], Striker (Butting Horns; Crushing; Cannot Parry, -40%; Limited Arc, Front, -40%) [1], Teeth (Fangs) [2], and Threshold Entity (p. 27) [227]; and remove Outsider. Some have an Alternate Form, usually human, but with major Supernatural Features (e.g., Third Eye or No Face). *363 points*.

Rakshasa: These Indian demons come in countless varieties, from flesh-eating ghouls to beings more like faerie, or succubi; there are even "good" rakshasas. Almost all are magical tricksters, formidable combatants, and capable shapeshifters. Some are masters of illusion. In their native form – if they have one – they're hideous, tiger-like monsters with backward-pointing feet and curved tusks. They grow more powerful in darkness; the new moon is when they're most fearsome. For complex reasons, the gods allow them to exist in their own kingdom. *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+4 [40], IQ+2 [40], HT+1 [10], Appearance (Monstrous) [-20], Claws (Sharp) [5], Compulsive Behavior (12) (Ruining funerals) [-5], DR 2 [10], Magery 2 [25], Morph (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Unlimited, +50%) [140], Striker (Tusks; Large Piercing; Cannot Parry, -40%) [4], Threshold Entity (p. 27) [227], Vampiric Bite [30], and Weakness (Sunlight; 1d/minute) [-60]; remove Outsider; modify Insubstantiality with Reversion, +60% (p. 16); change ER to ER 25 (Accessibility, Only in Darkness, -20%) [60]; and buy the innate spells Darkness, Daze, and Zombie, all (H) IQ+2 [4]-14 (includes +2 for Magery). *532 points*.

Tempter: These are Hell's slick corrupters – the ones who lead people over the brink of sin. They work best from the shadows, rarely manifesting. *Stats:* Demon [201]; add ST+2 [20], IQ+1 [20], HT+2 [20], HP+3 [6], Appearance (Attractive) [4], Charisma 3 [15], Empathy [15], Magery 1 [15], Morph (Cosmetic, -50%; Retains Shape, -20%) [30], Smooth Operator 3 [45], and Voice [10]; and improve FP bonus to +10. *416 points*.

Fear of No Hell: Frankenstein's Monster

Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* carries an interesting subtitle: *or, The Modern Prometheus.* Prometheus, in Greek myth, stole the secret of fire from the gods, liberating mankind from their tyranny forever. In Shelley's mind, the power of reason and science had done the same with the Christian God. But, she asked, what then? Without God, how will man know the boundaries of evil – and what does it mean that there is, now, nothing that Man Was Not Meant To Know?

Her protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, uses chemistry (*not* electricity) to awaken a being constructed of corpses, whom he blasphemously names Adam. Adam begins as a gentle blank slate, then educates himself and realizes that human society hates and fears him. He eventually grows to hate his creator, and seeks to drive Victor mad, kill his bride, and destroy him – just as, in Shelley's mind, man had destroyed God. The Monster, Adam, is a symbol of the fear that there *is* no Hell – that man is truly the master of his own destiny, and therefore doomed forever by his own selfish pride.

> *Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful.*
>
> *– Mary Shelley,* ***Frankenstein***

Adam

243 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+12 (Size, -10%) [108]; IQ+4 [80]; HT+8 [80].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; HP+6 (Size, -10%) [11].

Advantages: DR 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [6]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 14) [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Photographic Memory [10]; Temperature Tolerance 3 (Cold) [3]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Bestial [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Loner (12) [-5]; Obsession (12) (Revenge on creator *or* reproducing) [-10]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

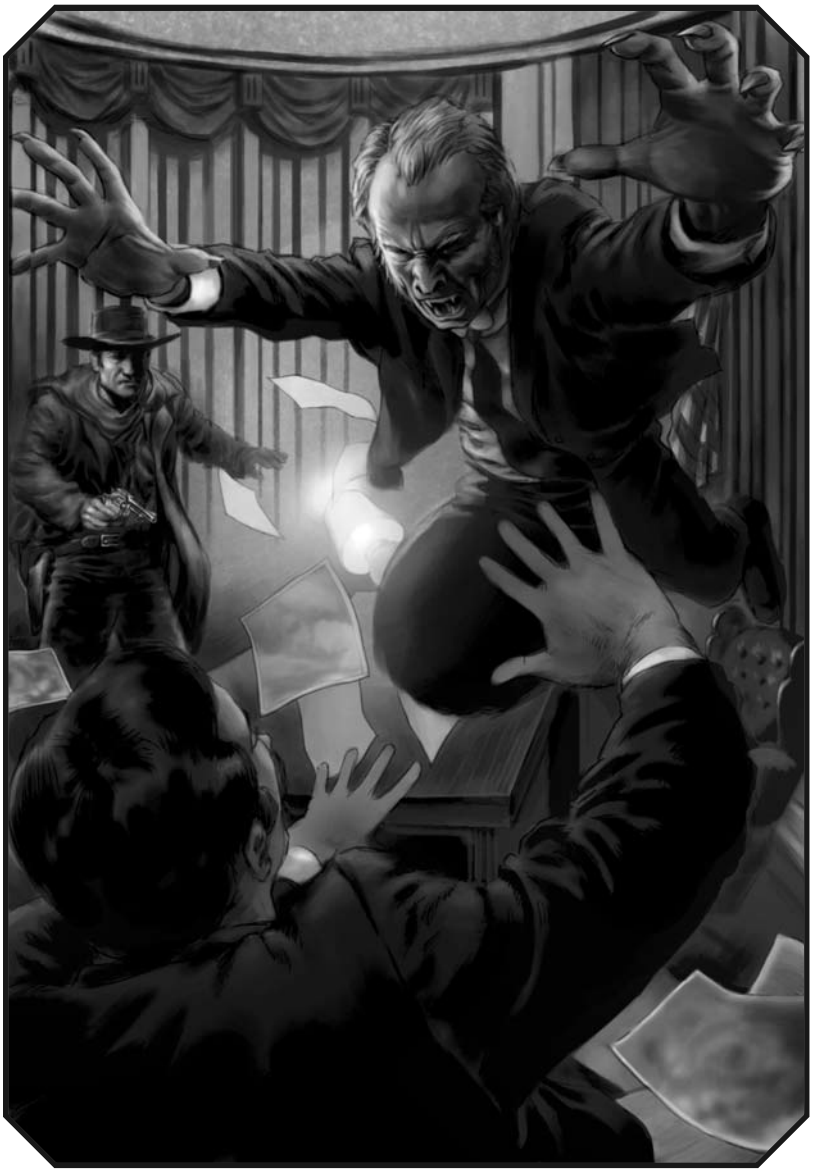
Variations

In the novel, Adam had a voracious intellect, and possessed Chemistry, Philosophy, and other abstruse skills. In the movies, by contrast, Frankenstein's creation is barely sentient. Animated by electricity, this version of the Monster symbolizes thoughtless scientific "progress" and brute physicality; the "abnormal" brain in his misshapen cranium simply drives him further along the road to mindless rage after society rejects him. He learns to fear fire, the gift of Prometheus – and to hate those who use it. He wishes to reproduce, only to discover that his hideous nature prevents it. In the later Universal "monster rally" movies, the Monster becomes a kind of goon enforcer for Dracula, or occasionally an innocent (though still mindless and bestial) being, torn between the evil Dracula and the tormented Wolf-Man.

Brute Monster: Adam [243]; add DX-2 [-40], Basic Speed-2 [-40], Basic Move-1 [-5], Cannot Speak [-15], Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Disease [10], Immunity to Poison [15], Injury Tolerance (Unliving) [20], Phobia (6) (Fire) [-10], Unhealing (Partial; Can be repaired by a mad scientist) [-20], and Unkillable 1 [50]; remove Enhanced Move; improve HP bonus to +10 and Temperature Tolerance to 10; reduce IQ modifier to -2; and worsen Loner to (6). *127 points*.

Chapter Three
Dark Theatres

Having dealt with the guard, Scott and I threw open the doors to the Governor's office. He sat alone, behind a fine desk, looking surprisingly hale, even robust, for a government official. "I am Captain Scott," said my companion, "and this is my associate, Dr. Finch. We have been trying to see you for two weeks on an urgent matter, but your staff" (and here Scott snorted contemptuously) "claimed you were receiving no visitors."



"This is about those gruesome murders in Tombstone, is it not?"

I was surprised that the Governor knew our purpose, but Scott pressed on: "Indeed, sir. I've ridden from Tucson to Tucumcari on this, and the Tombstone case is just one straw in the wind. Show him your photographs, Finch."

I opened my valise and drew out a packet of photographic prints, each the evidence of hours' labor with the bulky – but indispensable to the true criminologist – camera and developing-tanks. Each was also the evidence of a horrific crime. The Governor bent his head over the pictures, taking in every detail – the splintered bones, the angular bite-marks in the armpits and groins, the peculiar signs of ***roasting*** *– with interest, even avidity.*

"Dr. Finch has many more such pictures, taken of recent murder victims and of bodies exhumed from half the cemeteries in this territory. We have evidence of not just one cannibal killer, but a ring of them, going back perhaps 40 years. Or more."

The Governor met our eyes, and as a medical man I was concerned for jaundice – despite his seeming good health, he must have recovered from some infection recently. But his voice was clear, if low, when he asked: "Do you suspect a cult, then? Some savage Indians or half-breeds?"

Scott replied, in his forthright manner, "Sir, I suspect white men did this. A cult, or better, a conspiracy of white men who wanted the power of Wen-Di-Go."

I was surprised when the Governor was unsurprised. "Wen-Di-Go? The power to become immortal, impossibly strong, connected with . . . controlling . . . the winds and weather? Who would not be tempted by such an offer? Especially when the price is so low . . . and so pleasurably paid."

Whether the Governor knocked over the lamp first, or Scott drew his Peacemaker, I never knew. There was a crash and a shot, darkness and muzzle-flash, and then I felt the Governor's breath cold on my face, smelling of rotting pork. There was another shot, and my wrist was yanked upward. Talons tore away my frock coat and shirt, and chisel-like teeth tore into my arm . . .

When you start a ***Horror*** game, you have several decisions to make. First, work out whether you want to run a one-shot adventure or an extended campaign – and if you opt for a campaign, lend some thought to its narrative structure. Next, determine the game's approximate power level, which will guide that of the PCs. After that, think about the monster (or monsters) the heroes will face.

While making these initial decisions, also set your adventure or campaign's "ground rules," and fix the boundaries of the playing field: Is it an epic, globetrotting game of war to the knife against Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, or a deadly serious hunt for the foul vampire who threatens one young girl? By now you've probably given some thought to genre and background (fantasy world, historical horror campaign, science-fiction universe, etc.), so be sure to keep related design considerations in mind while you scheme. Finally, guide the players in creating their characters, making certain that their PCs will fit into the game you have planned.

Making these decisions carefully will ensure that your game runs smoothly – and horrifically.

Campaign Length

The GM may choose to run either a one-shot adventure or an extended campaign. A one-shot will run for only a few play sessions – perhaps just one – while a campaign can last for many nights, or even indefinitely. This choice affects every other decision, including the type of characters the players design, the monsters the heroes face, and the resolution of the plot.

One-Shots

The one-shot adventure lends itself well to horror role-playing. It has a simple, linear plot with a definite conclusion. A one-shot should play like a horror movie or short story: normal people find themselves besieged by the unknown, and struggle to survive and perhaps even defeat the monster that threatens them. Such adventures can typically be played out in one to three sessions.

A one-shot is usually easier to run than an extended campaign, because it's *finite*. The GM can design a simple, straightforward adventure involving a single horrific threat without worrying about the mundane repercussions of the plot. No one has to pay for the barn the heroes use to toast Frankenstein's monster in a one-shot, nor do you have to worry about what happens if they *don't* save the President from becoming a werewolf. The PCs in a one-shot adventure can be tailored to the story and tied to the monsters or the plot through their advantages, disadvantages, quirks, and skills. And because they're designed for just one adventure, you don't have to be too concerned if some of them give their lives in the valiant struggle against the forces of the night.

Extended Campaigns

The extended campaign, on the other hand, could run forever. It features a number of successive, often overlapping plots involving the same protagonists. Some players will create purpose-built investigators, paying special attention to combat and occult skills. Others might start with the same kinds of "plain folks" they would choose for a one-shot, and let them *grow* into occult investigators in play; these characters will be especially meaningful to the players, because they were actually *played* from their very first encounter with the supernatural.

An extended campaign lets the GM and players investigate the personalities of the heroes and their supernatural opposition in much greater depth than is possible in a one-shot. It also gives the GM room to develop "epic" plots, in which only the PCs stand between the armies of evil and the unsuspecting world. A good campaign will play like a television or novel series, in which new threats arise as old ones are overcome, and old enemies reappear with fiendish new plots.

To run an extended campaign successfully, the GM must strike a balance between continuity and risk. A "campaign" in which everyone designs a new character every week is a precarious one. *Some* of the PCs need to survive from one adventure to the next, or the players will likely abandon the game.

Yet true risk is necessary. The players *must* be aware that the heroes put their lives in jeopardy every time they seek out the unknown. Death is a reality in horror, and it has to threaten PCs as well as NPCs. Otherwise, a horror campaign will quickly deteriorate into a weekly waltz through a carnival spook house, where the investigators stick their tongues out at the werewolf before plugging him full of silver bullets.

Sometimes, a hero in an extended campaign *must* die – but when that happens, try to make it count. Arrange things so that his sacrifice helps destroy the creature, or rescue the beautiful heroine, or cover his allies' escape. The GM isn't responsible for stupidity on the players' part, though! If someone does something so foolish that he deserves to die, then let him die. The PCs aren't immortal merely because they're *player* characters.

Extended Campaigns and Plausibility

Any random group of people, thrown together by Fate, might have a supernatural encounter . . . once. That's enough for a one-shot adventure. But what if the heroes survive and the players enjoy themselves?

For the GM, the biggest question then becomes: "Why do *these particular people* continue to encounter supernatural phenomena?" He must create a rationale for the party to form a cohesive group. He also needs to provide a logical motivation for them to go *looking* for spooky events.

The most direct solution is to establish an organization to which most or all of the investigators belong. They might be officers of a police or government agency, sworn paladins of the Crown, initiates of a lodge of white magicians, tabloid journalists seeking sensationalism, or members of a peculiar gentlemen's club or academic ghost-hunting society.

They may have a specific headquarters, budget, and pool of clients from which the GM can draw adventures. This tends to require significant advance preparation, but the players should be invited to participate in this process, as their input will also help them flesh out the PCs.

An alternative approach is the mysterious benefactor, perhaps a Patron with the Secret limitation (see p. B73). This entails providing the party with a single backer – usually an individual, not an organization – who requires their services in exchange for reward. The patron's interest in the supernatural may be purely academic, or it might be more sinister. Perhaps he's a member of a secret order (such as the Golden Dawn), a cultist worshiping a dark deity, or a fanatical collector who's "using" the investigators to gain valuable information or artifacts.

The GM should firmly integrate the heroes' organization or benefactor into the game world, rather than leaving it as a generic plot-spawning device. Make the NPC who sends the group on missions a real, three-dimensional person. Introduce fellow workers who can get into scrapes later on. Give an agency, order, or society its own rivals and patrons. Center an occasional scenario on these other employees, competitors, and backers. In desperate cases, the investigators might return from their latest assignment to find their organization destroyed, taken over by evil, or both. This gives them a mystery to solve and a nemesis to pursue; eventually, they may even decide to rebuild things themselves.

The heroes might even cut out the middleman, get organized, and set up shop as professional occultists from the outset. This allows the players total control over their clients and the types of adventures the party gets into (possibly to the GM's chagrin), and also provides interesting challenges as they attempt to secure funding and run their own "ghost-breaking" business – demonstrating that even Accounting and Administration can be useful skills in a horror campaign! As their organization grows, so will their enemies. Powerful monsters, sorcerers, and other occult entities may feel threatened by this new force in the world, and take preemptive action.

I had to invent plans and stratagems, and to look about, and to think of things beforehand, because nobody must dream of anything that I was doing or going to do . . .
– Arthur Machen, "The White People"

Narrative Structures

Many campaigns are built around a *narrative structure;* e.g., the ever-popular quest for an item or battle to defeat a master nemesis. Such a structure is something like the format of a scenario (see *Scenario Design,* pp. 132-134), but operating over a larger scale. A structure that's intended to climax before the end of the campaign is a *story arc* within the larger campaign. Many campaigns – especially short ones – have just one story arc: the story of the campaign itself.

It's important to emphasize that the presence of a narrative structure doesn't make the PCs cardboard cutouts to be moved by the GM along a pre-assigned story track. Some structures require more "scripting" – or, as gamers who dislike this say, "railroading" – than others, but none of them should replace the players' decisions as the key motivator of the characters' actions. Players are justifiably sensitive to what they see as too much railroading of the storyline, although each has his own idea of "too much." It's a rare player who's comfortable simply being dumped into a setting with no idea of what the GM has in mind or what kind of stories would work best in it. (But if you find yourself with such players, count your blessings; they're almost always more than eager to involve themselves in your world, and they get into more trouble than any GM could ever think to throw at them!) On the other hand, while players will seldom abandon a quest in the middle of a story arc, they usually appreciate having more than one way to complete it.

However, nothing prevents the GM from presenting a series of choices that ultimately lead to the same outcome, introducing false dichotomies, or using the old "Schrödinger's plot" trick (if the questers leave the city from the east gate, the beggar with the cryptic prophecy is at the east gate; if they leave by the north gate, he's on the north). In general, it's acceptable to railroad as long as the players don't see the tracks or hear the whistle – after all, *somebody* has to move the story along, and as with all the hard parts of the game, that's the GM's job. Just be ready to move with the players; if, despite everything, they leave a story hanging in the middle, then that's another source of loose ends to bedevil the PCs later on. It's often wise to have a central narrative structure and one or two "subplot" structures for the adventurers to enmesh themselves in if they leave the main one, whether accidentally or on purpose.

Here are a few common narrative structures, with some hints on using them in the design of a horror campaign.

Escape

The Escape narrative structure begins with the protagonists in some terrible predicament from which they must extricate themselves: trapped in a madman's dreams, under sentence of death by the Illuminati, infected with vampirism, or something equally upsetting. They may face opposition from a villain or villains in their attempt to escape, but in contrast to the Nemesis structure, the focus is on the heroes rather than on their opponents. This makes Escape an excellent structure for psychological horror (pp. 125-126) or monsters-as-characters campaigns (p. 11).

Putting the heroes into the predicament should be done either openly at the beginning of the campaign or as soon as possible; players tend to react badly to involuntary PC confinement. The climax of the Escape narrative has to be neatly timed. If it happens too early, much of the potential for horror is lost; if it comes too late, the players will be frustrated and sullen.

Gauntlet

The Gauntlet is something of a combination of Escape and Quest. The protagonists are moving through a horrifying place or series of places. They aren't necessarily imprisoned in the Gauntlet, nor are they necessarily searching for anything in particular. Think of the Gauntlet as the "road movie" of horror; the movie *Deliverance* offers a classic example. When the heroes emerge on the other side, they'll be free of the horror; therefore, the climax of this narrative most often occurs right before the final boundary is reached. The allegorical weight of the journey at its heart makes the Gauntlet an excellent structure for psychological horror or dream-world horror (p. 114). A Gauntlet is also an ideal shorter arc to include in another structure – especially its cousins, Escape and Quest.

Nemesis

In the Nemesis narrative structure, the heroes are opposed by a villain or a villainous force – whether the Lord of the Vampires, the Ancient Order of Black Magicians, or the Grey aliens. The narrative is the story of their battle, which can occur in one place or all over the world. The heroes might be in direct conflict with the villain throughout, or they may battle an ever-escalating number of monsters, henchmen, goons, undead, etc., and only gradually realize their adversary's true nature or identity. The Nemesis almost always dwells in a particularly foul and unpleasant lair (or at least one that's horrifically dangerous for visitors). The climax is the final showdown between the protagonists and their archenemy.

Most "monster movies" utilize the Nemesis structure. It's excellent for thematic unity and building a consistent tone, which has made it one of the classic narratives for horror roleplaying as well. It's especially strong in pulp (p. 124) and conspiratorial horror (p. 117).

Picaresque

In the Picaresque narrative structure, the protagonists battle a random assortment of foes. This is essentially a "no narrative structure" narrative structure. Television series are often fundamentally Picaresque, with *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* being the premier horror example. Few novels are Picaresque, although many continuing series become Picaresque on a large scale. Long-running horror campaigns tend to become Picaresque in much the same way, built up out of a series of story arcs using other structures.

Picaresque has the advantage of being almost impossible to railroad; players with a severe allergy to railroading will enjoy it. It also serves as a good way to introduce one of the *other* narrative structures. If, in the course of the Picaresque story arc, the heroes make an enemy of a potential Nemesis, or decide to Quest after some mystical device, the fact that they chose their fate will make them accept the awful horrors in store for them.

The disadvantage is a tendency to sink rapidly into formula or meaninglessness. The GM must make a concerted effort to keep the Picaresque campaign interesting and varied; building a detailed world helps here. It's also harder to develop thematic unity for a Picaresque campaign, which can make some styles of horror – such as psychological horror – more difficult to pull off.

Quest

The Quest is the classic narrative structure of fantasy roleplaying, and one that still holds a great deal of attraction for gamers. In the Quest, the adventurers must travel to a distant place and perform some specific action. This often involves obtaining something – a magic sword, the Holy Grail, an abducted sister, etc. – but might instead involve destroying some object, or simply activating it. The Quest's climax comes toward the end, when the heroes have reached the goal and must battle the final foes to achieve their mission. Often, a Quest is necessary to defeat a Nemesis. The Quest works equally well for high-action pulp horror and subtle psychological horror – and all of cosmic horror (pp. 124-125) can be seen as the Quest for forbidden knowledge.

Mix and Match

These narrative structures can be combined in any number of fashions. For instance, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* combined a Nemesis (each season's "Big Bad") with the Picaresque (the various other demons and teen-angst plagues in Sunnydale). *The X-Files* combined a Nemesis (the conspiracy to cover up UFOs) with a Quest (to find "the truth" and Mulder's sister) *and* elements of the Picaresque (the various mutants, serial killers, and miscellaneous adventures not connected to the Nemesis or the Quest). In general, a long-running campaign winds up taking on a number of structures, often at the same time. If the GM is paying attention, each structure can have its own satisfactions and its own sense of closure.

Antagonists

Without characters, there's no story, and without a story, there's no game. The players will build the protagonists, and will often surprise you with their eagerness to fit a PC into your plot. That makes choosing the opposition – and calibrating it to the players' choices – that much more important.

The Nature of the Beast: Enemies

Every story demands conflict, and thus antagonists for your protagonists, the PCs. In horror, these foes are likely to be monsters, black magicians, vile cultists, or something similar. The type of game you plan to run will help you determine the general approach to take in the all-important task of enemy design. (For advice on picking specific monsters, see Chapter 2; for specific villainous motivations, see *Villainous Motives,* pp. 136-138.)

The simplest horror plots pit the PCs against a single monster, or perhaps a small band of creatures. This sort of story lends itself best to a one-shot adventure or a lone play session in an extended campaign, as it lacks the complexity to hold the players' attention over several sessions. Still, a single monster can provide an entertaining evening of terror for a few players – particularly if the beast is a hunter such as a werewolf, a psycho killer, or a pack of walking dead.

One Enemy

A more involved single-monster plot is the One Enemy extended campaign, in which the adventurers face an army of monsters led by an individual of immense power, what *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* called the "Big Bad." The heroes may have to discover the leader's identity, or they may know that from the start and simply lack proof. Once the investigators lock onto their foe, the One Enemy will command his minions to attack them relentlessly. The One Enemy can be counted on to kidnap Dependents, arrange "accidents," and generally harass the PCs to death.

A good example of the One Enemy is the charismatic young senator who's secretly a powerful sorcerer. The heroes must try to stop him from increasing his power to the point where he can take over the country (or – gasp! – the world), but they can't just walk up and shoot him – he's too popular and well-guarded. Instead of moving against the warlock senator directly, the investigators must gather evidence against him, while foiling his nefarious plots and defending themselves from the attacks of his puppet fiends.

GURPS Cabal

A common *enemy* is as useful as a shared patron for explaining an extended campaign that pits the same heroes against diverse monsters and supernatural terrors. A particularly good choice here is the Cabal (p. B543): a secret society of black magicians, psis, and monsters that has existed since the time of the Pyramids. Of course, the Cabal is as suitable a patron for monstrous or magical PCs as it is an adversary for monster-hunting ones!

Below are the key elements of the "Cabal mythos." Earlier editions of ***Horror*** gave a more complete outline of the Cabal's tactics, magic, and rationale; that material, *greatly* expanded, now appears in ***GURPS Cabal.*** Gamers who desire details are encouraged to consult that volume.

- The Cabal wishes to protect its own existence, expand its power, and keep knowledge of the supernatural – magic, psionics, vampirism, etc. – out of the hands of the rest of the world. It has *no* compunctions about killing, lobotomizing, zombifying, or devouring anyone who impedes these objectives.
- The Cabal has many scattered Lodges of 10-20 Cabalists each, commonly concealed in other organizations. If something (or some*one,* such as the PCs) begins to present a problem that the local Lodge can't handle, they call in higher-ranking and more powerful Cabalists to help . . . and so forth, escalating as the PCs' power does.
- Every Cabalist has two, usually more-powerful, Cabalists (called *ultors*) watching over his shoulder, ready to avenge his death or exposure by meddling PCs. (He is the *passer* to those *ultors*.) These avengers can be any kind of monster, magician, conspirator, or phenomenon that the GM likes.
- The Cabal itself fears some of the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, especially the hellish and primordial *qlippoth:* insectile survivors of a reality quake (p. B534) at the dawn of Creation. This doesn't stop the madder or more vicious Cabalists from experimenting with, and trying to control, such Things.
- Between its own 4,000-year history and a magical time-portal phenomenon known as the Gates of Thoth, the Cabal can appear in any place or time required by the campaign.
- Among the Cabal's secrets are ways to enter the astral plane, commune with dead gods, and manipulate powerful magical forces about which mortals know nothing. In short, the Cabal can do anything the GM needs it to do in order to move the game along.

Desperate Struggle

Similar to the One Enemy campaign is the Desperate Struggle, in which the heroes wage a secret war against a growing army of monsters. They have discovered the supernatural threat but can convince no one of its truth – when they turn to the authorities for help, they're dismissed as crackpots. Foes in this sort of scenario are seldom intelligent; instead, they're fertile or contagious, as appropriate. Werewolves, fungoids, walking dead, and creatures from the deep are great foes for a Desperate Struggle.

An even more sinister struggle involves a foe that can blend in with humans – perhaps the Unseelie, androids, an alien race, or a band of demons intent on possessing and subjugating humanity. In this situation, when the investigators look for official help, they're likely to reveal themselves to enemies who've *already* infiltrated the government. Thus, the PCs become fugitives from the law, trying to defend mankind from a threat it can't perceive.

A particularly grim version of the Desperate Struggle is a campaign focusing on the never-ending fight against Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Such a game is based on the thoroughly depressing premise of "cosmic horror" (pp. 124-125). Horrific monsters of incredible power and malevolence are continually trying to establish dominance on this planet, inflicting a horrible and painful extinction on mankind. The heroes – no matter how brave, resourceful, or powerful – are flyspecks compared to these creatures. With luck, they may be able to hold the Things off for a time, but mankind's final doom is likely.

Obviously, this can be a bit of a downer for players used to slaying dragons in one turn, or ruling entire galaxies. The change of pace will probably do them good – a horrible death or two will heighten their appreciation of a hard-earned victory. The key to making this type of campaign appealing is to emphasize the bravery and nobility of the hopeless fight: "'Tis a far, far better thing I do . . .".

The GM should allow small victories. For example, disrupting a cult ritual that would summon a certain horrible Thing, thus slamming the gate to trap It on the "other side" until the stars are right once again, which won't be for another 87 years. That might not be long for an eternal Thing to wait, but to mortals, it's a significant success.

Anything Goes

If one horror isn't enough, you can throw your campaign open to everything your imagination can devise, presenting a supernatural smorgasbord in which Anything Goes. The other options discussed so far assume that only one kind of monster exists, and that the rest are merely legend. The Anything Goes approach, however, allows that *any* of them could be real. Werewolves, zombies, mad slashers, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know – they're all out there, and they'll all be coming to get the PCs.

The main advantage of such a campaign is that the players won't be as readily bored. Every adventure brings a new enemy, so tactics that work one week may well be useless the next. The narrative structure of an Anything Goes campaign need not be Picaresque (p. 101), but that's what it will come to resemble unless the GM takes special care to build something else.

Reckless introduction of creatures can quickly reduce the game to a chorus of "The Monster Mash" – monsters of every conceivable kind tripping over one another, until none of them are frightening any more. Keep the variety level high, but let the players deal with one threat before moving on to the next. Reintroduce an old nemesis from time to time to play on old emotions (and disadvantages), keeping a thread of continuity running through an otherwise chaotic campaign.

Let the Players Play

A roleplaying game isn't a book or a film. The GM must not expect the PCs to fear anything predictable or easily defended against. Movie mad slashers kill victims who are too preoccupied or helpless to fight back or escape. Players rarely let their characters back themselves into corners and faint at convenient moments. If the *only* danger is physical violence, modern settings provide guns that no werewolf's fangs or slasher's knife can match. Players won't act like the cannon-fodder in horror films, and although you can mechanically simulate fear with repeated Fright Checks, it's vastly more satisfying for GM and players alike if the fear rises organically from the game – if the story, and the danger, are genuinely *scary*.

Horror scenarios generally build on the dramatic power of the situation and on the heroes' ability to interact. The climax of a horror adventure is the party facing the unknown. If a group of players and their characters aren't comfortable with one another, or have had little experience working together, then a horror scenario is a good way to create camaraderie among them – they'll have no one else to depend on, make decisions with, or send down that darkened hallway. If the group consists of longtime colleagues, then horror adventures are among the best opportunities for roleplaying, as old chums find their skills and experience challenged by unpredictable events.

Precisely Calibrated Evil

The heroes' power level should help determine that of the horrors. As a guideline, the main *on-screen* adversary (chief villain or boss monster) should be two to three times as powerful as the average PC, but not immune to the group acting in concert. Henchmen, chief lieutenants, and other secondary threats should be at roughly the same power level as the protagonists – they'll be the party's most common antagonists. Hordes and hordes of lower-powered guards, goons, summoned monsters, and so on can round out the cast as needed. The key to this calibration is for the heroes to be relentlessly endangered but not instantly doomed.

As the PCs increase in power, you can track their progress through the hierarchy of evil: They overcome the low-powered monsters, then they thwart the chief lieutenants one by one, and eventually they can face down the chief villain on something like equal terms. The only thing the GM must keep in mind is that the powers of darkness should always stay dangerous. By the time the heroes have taken down the Vampire Lord of Jamaica, they've discovered evidence of his (vastly older, more-powerful) sire back in London, or of the Horrific Swamp Entity he traveled to Jamaica to placate and awaken . . .

High-Powered Horror

Once the Fearless Monster Hunters grow powerful (that's subjective, but 500+ points qualifies in anybody's books), they become *really* fearless – and that isn't the point of horror gaming. The GM should ensure that the horror tracks the PCs' power progression, and be prepared to throw something else at them at any time. High-powered gaming requires a *lot* of improvisation; players are devious sorts who always come up with some kind of last-ditch plan. Have a backup strategy; know your game history and don't be caught off-guard by a sudden reconnaissance-in-force into the Hell-Jungle of Darvis III, or a magical assault on the sanity of the Vampire King. Knowing your villain (see *A Good Bad Man Is Hard to Find,* pp. 136-139) is crucial to knowing how he plans to gorily slaughter the meddling fools this time – and you should be ready when the heroes try to thwart him with something you still hadn't anticipated.

Raise the Stakes

Feel free to add more horror if the heroes seem to be having things too easy. Instead of six ghouls in the lair, there are a dozen. Or the lair opens onto a disused New York subway tunnel, where there are *60* ghouls . . . guarding a skeletal subway train . . . where the Ghoul King sleeps with his seven hand-picked bodyguard brides. Pull back the visible scope (p. 106) as needed to reestablish a mood of horror.

Remember that monsters attack when and where they have the advantage: no light, deep in the swamp, in dreams, etc. Use their advantages ruthlessly. If the PCs represent an even match, then the horrors should attack the heroes in detail. They should mob stragglers, and launch murderous assaults on investigators who "just went ahead to scout." They may even use mazes, illusions, or lures to separate the party.

Finally, make the antagonists *tougher.* Horrors that the players love to hate should *always* come back, via Extra Life (p. B55), Supernatural Durability (p. B89), or good old Unkillable (p. B95), while a living adversary you want to stay alive should have Hard to Kill (p. B58), Regeneration (p. B80), or both. Either sort of foe can have a cult devoted to summoning his spirit back from Hell, or dribbling sacrificial blood on her ashes, or otherwise setting up the sequel. Don't forget the villainous virtue of cowardice! Running away gives the players the thrill of victory, while leaving the way open for a rematch – on the opposition's terms, next time. If the PCs *still* have a tactical advantage, then give the main villain powerful magical artifacts or advanced technology (the kind the heroes can't use if captured). At a last resort, any monster can worship a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know . . .

Weaken the Heroes

Ammo runs out. Spells fatigue the caster. Spaceships suffer mysterious engine malfunctions. After a sufficiently long battle, or under certain field conditions, the heroes might have to rely on knives, fists, and wits rather than technology or sorcery. An Escape scenario (p. 101) might even begin with the adventurers captured, stripped of weapons and gear, and chained in the monster's lair!

Alternatively, change the battleground. Put the heroes underwater, or in hard vacuum, or deep in quicksand – anywhere penalties start to accrue. Monsters might use blinding, stunning, paralyzing, and similar attacks in addition to long-range ambushes or hit-and-run tactics.

Keep in mind, however, that horror gaming requires collaboration far more than it does helplessness for its effect. If the players wanted to play 50-point victims, they would have built those characters instead! Keep the obstacles fair, and always make sure it's about the horror rather than about some GM need to "win."

Target the Threats

Even Superman has his kryptonite. High-powered PCs will have weaknesses: psionic vampires can threaten magic-proof heroes, a brilliant magus might go down under a swarm of wererats before he can cast a spell, mind control can turn combat gods against their allies, and so on. Adventurers with Overconfidence can be lured into ambushes, and those with Paranoia fooled into shooting off all their silver ammo at wild dogs. Such tactics work best as a reaction to the investigators' actions; any enemy becomes scarier when its attacks get personalized. The players *will* be trying to deduce the monsters' weaknesses – the horrors should be doing the same to the hunters!

Endanger Others

Just because the Monster Hunters are bulletproof doesn't mean their friends are! Most investigators have Dependents, Allies, Patrons, and other folk they care about; a vampire who kidnaps the hero's kid sister, or kindly old mentor, or boyfriend can lure a powerful foe onto chosen ground. Right-thinking PCs should still feel vicarious fear if monsters threaten perfect strangers. A school bus full of kids, the parish priest, or even the cop or soldier who ran into danger before the party got there can trigger a useful level of concern.

Keep It Mysterious

Never tell the players what they're hunting. The foes attack from the darkness, then fade back into it; the shape gliding through the water can't be picked up on infrared if it's cold-blooded; the undead sorcerer *looks* familiar, but he's just too decayed for recognition. Keep the horrors mysterious, and the fear of the unknown can do its work for you. Even if a single ghoul can't kill a black op in a stand-up fight, he can harry, scar, and unnerve him forever. Mess with the players' minds, and with their characters' perceptions. Play change-up with the monsters, work different archetypes and fears, swap out characteristics between templates. Keep the players guessing – and keep them nervous about what they might discover.

Change the Story

Don't run a scenario or a campaign that depends on straight-up confrontation for its horror. Draw horror from the world, or from the evil's intangible effects on the heroes. Use the fear of social isolation (see *Isolation,* p. 122) to point up the price that the investigators pay for their capabilities and calling. Cosmic horror (pp. 124-125) draws power from slow discoveries, not from unkillable monsters – even if the PCs easily defeat the Minions, dread can set in when they realize the Cosmic Deities are eternal. Psychological horror (pp. 125-126) often works even better with high-powered Monster Hunters; they have more to fear from their own disintegration. In a conspiratorial game, the protagonists don't know whom to fight, or where the enemy is. A campaign in which the players take the role of monsters (p. 11) can be as much an exploration of the dark side of power as a matter of counting the odds.

Design Parameters

A horror campaign, given its primary directives of evoking emotion and building atmosphere, can't easily afford the "ad hoc" quality that other campaigns can allow or even thrive on. Its design – while not necessarily as unitary as that of a horror scenario – should serve to clear the area for the construction of an emotional impact. This involves answering fundamental design questions, so that aspects of the game don't wind up working at cross-purposes. These answers define the lines along which the GM will be building or growing the campaign.

Scale

Scale is the level at which the protagonists are interacting with the world, and the results of their actions upon it. Are they acting on a *prosaic scale,* simply struggling to get by, scrounging their next meal, and hoping to avoid a messy and predictable death? Or are they working on an *epic scale,* resolving the fate of nations, saving the world, and daring Hell itself?

Normally, low-powered characters operate closer to the prosaic scale, while higher-powered ones act at an epic scale. This is only the standard use of these types, however; compelling, gripping, and frightening horror can be created by juxtaposing opposites. For instance, many horror novels and films feature average people somehow stopping some monstrous evil that could spell the doom of millions – and tautly ratchet up the horror thanks to such stakes. At the other pole, a useful way to integrate super-powered characters into a game world is to present them with prosaic stakes: one person's life, dignity, or sanity. The need to work on a "human" scale can also restrain those whose normal temptation is to blot out the sun with their heroics . . . and again, the thematic tension helps induce nervousness, and hopefully fear, in the players. And of course making the monsters more dangerous can easily return higher-powered heroes to the prosaic concerns of their own survival!

Ultimately, the decision of scale should hinge on how comfortable the GM feels letting the players have the ability to alter his world through their actions. At least at first, he can independently decide on questions of scale. While some players tend to become impatient with a prosaic scale, enough creativity and effort by the GM can win them over. However, there will come a point where the party's actions begin to determine the campaign's scale. Like PC power, scale has a tendency to slip upward during the course of a long-running campaign. This shouldn't be any problem for the *prepared* GM – and unlike power, scale can be dramatically lowered (at least temporarily) without too many player complaints.

Splatter (p. 124) and psychological horror (pp. 125-126) games classically operate on the prosaic scale. Games in which the PCs are supernatural monsters – or supernatural monster-hunters – often begin as prosaic-scale games and escalate as the protagonists grow more confident and familiar with their surroundings and abilities. Pulp (p. 124) is a favorite style for epic-scale gaming, especially in horror, although it can work on a fairly prosaic level for some time; for instance, much of Robert E. Howard's pulp horror concerns his heroes barely surviving some malevolent creature's slavering assault rather than battling for the fate of the world. Conspiracy (p. 117) and cosmic horror (pp. 124-125) gain much of their power from slowly widening the campaign's scale; what initially seems to concern only one PC or NPC becomes a battle against insidious forces that can topple governments or devour continents. Silly horror can handle any scale, although it seems most comfortable when fluctuating wildly between extremes.

Scope

Scope is what the PCs can see, touch, influence, and kill. Where scale relates to *why* the horror must be stopped (To save a life? Or to save Chicago?), scope deals with *what, who,* and sometimes *how.* Scale is the heroes' goals and ambitions; scope is their range of action. A campaign that deals with but a single village is smaller in scope than one with ramifications throughout the realm – or through all history.

Scope is related to the campaign's power and scale; usually, the higher the power and the larger the scale, the bigger the scope. But while larger-scope games are *typically* epic-scale ones, that isn't always the case. A campaign of vast scope could chase across all of Europe for the prosaic stakes of one kidnapped woman's life, while a professor and his graduate students might save the entire world with a single day trip to a rural Massachusetts backwater. Think of scale as how much the heroes hope to achieve and scope as how important they see their allies and opponents as being.

Visible Scope

The players and their characters seldom have all the information, however. The werewolves infesting Limehouse might be just one part of the larger plan of the Beast Lord to bring all of Europe to an animal state. The heroes see only the werewolves in Limehouse (the *visible scope*), not a horror that affects the entire Continent (the *actual scope*).

In horror gaming, especially, it's usually a good idea to keep the visible scope smaller than the actual scope. This increases the element of the unknown (and the potentially horrific). It also helps the GM keep a handle on the campaign; if the players can see the actual scope, then the heroes might upset some important apple carts upon which the storyline depends. Some styles of horror, such as cosmic horror or conspiratorial horror, absolutely depend on this rule. With other styles, such as pulp horror, it's less important. And in psychological horror, the visible scope is almost always the actual scope by definition – it's all about what's happening in the protagonist's head, even if the scenery is full of ancient cults and omnipresent Men In Black.

The climax of the story arc or of the campaign is the place where the players can get a glimpse, however transient, of the game's actual scope. This provides a reward for the players while (hopefully) delivering a shock of vertiginous dread. When the climax has passed, so should the vision of the actual scope. With any luck, the players will work even harder to get another glimpse of the actual scope, which can only result in better roleplaying and more focused attention to the story.

Austerity

Austerity is the degree to which the heroes are held accountable for their actions. Consider a vigilante who shoots a black magician in a modern horror campaign:

- In a *very austere* game, he'll have the local police department on his tail, using every weapon in the modern forensic arsenal: fiber matching, fingerprints, DNA typing, etc. If caught, he'll be indicted and tried. If convicted, he'll go to prison or be executed.
- In a *moderately austere* game, he'll merely be "on the lam." He'll be unable to cross the path of the law again, but he'll be able to go "underground" in the same city without the police finding him.
- In a *lenient* (low to no austerity) game, he's home free, provided that there are no eyewitnesses. The police might even decide that the black magician deserved killing, and conveniently ignore any clues the assassin leaves behind!

Austerity generally tracks the game world's realism level; a grittily realistic campaign is normally an austere one. However, the consequences of a given realistic situation might vary significantly in severity. For example, advances in forensic science over the last century have made it much harder to get away with murder, even though the real world's austerity level has remained roughly the same. Similarly, a game set in a freewheeling frontier such as the pirate-infested 17th-century Caribbean or the Old West might impose fewer consequences than – or at least *different* ones from – a campaign set in a bureaucratic cyberpunk future.

Fundamentally, however, actions do carry consequences in the real world. An austere game will attempt to replicate these. Even at high levels of surrealism (p. 123) or fantasy, the party's actions can have *dramatic* and *mythic* (as opposed to *social*) repercussions, such as dramatic irony, justified fate, and karma. The most dizzying heights of unreality can be played as an austere game, if the GM so chooses.

The styles of horror game that privilege game-world realism tend to gravitate toward greater austerity. Cosmic, conspiratorial, and psychological horror are traditionally more austere. Pulp and splatter are customarily less austere, as are games where the heroes are supernatural creatures. Silly horror (p. 126) is almost always totally lenient. A *cinematic* game often relaxes the austerity of the laws of the campaign world, the laws of physics, or the laws of plausibility – sometimes, all three!

Within these broad categories, it's certainly possible to make adjustments one way or another. For instance, a psychological horror campaign of slowly building madness can begin as a completely austere game and gradually grow more and more lenient as the PCs' grasp of reality disintegrates. Cosmic and conspiratorial horror can be played at almost any level of austerity, although cosmic horror depends too much on realism – and paranoia, on consequences – to work well as fully lenient games.

Whatever the GM chooses, he should warn the players about the intended austerity level. This should probably be done out of game, while setting up the campaign; players hate surprises of this nature. If the warning doesn't take, of course, the GM is free to force the whole party to flee to Guatemala to avoid the FBI's investigation of their four-state murder-and-robbery spree.

Boundaries

The physical setting – the place where the action will unfold – plays a vital role in campaign planning. While this can seemingly be changed with greater ease than can, say, austerity level, it retains a great deal of impact upon the initial design. Horror campaigns depend so strongly on background specifics that detailing the surroundings with which the heroes will interact should take a high priority.

This concern only grows in importance if key elements of mood, important clues, and/or the central concepts of the horror itself depend on the setting, as they so often do.

The most basic choice is between a campaign that draws its power from its location, depending on consistency in that location to give it depth, and the campaign that draws its power from its variety, relying on the scope of that variety for its impact. There are possible compromises between the localized campaign and the globetrotting one, but most horror games gravitate toward one of these extremes. The GM who doesn't anticipate and plan for this tendency will find himself playing catch-up at an extremely inconvenient time.

Localized

The localized campaign is mostly or entirely restricted to one city, county, province, or small country. Individual scenarios may take place outside the main campaign setting, but they're driven by events inside it – and the PCs can expect to return to their "home base" at the end.

This approach gives the GM a chance to build a highly detailed, believable section of the game world. The heroes will be interacting with the same NPCs, passing the same locations, hearing connected rumors, and generally inserting themselves deeply into their environment. This pays enormous dividends in horror. Player characters – and *players* – who care about the area are easier to motivate. Familiar faces or locations can suddenly turn scary or dangerous, increasing the level of horror. Every advantage that a realistic, detailed game world carries is at least potentially accessible in the localized campaign.

The localized campaign also answers one of the nagging meta-game questions faced by any long-running horror game: "Why *do* we keep running into these horrible monsters?" In this approach, the explanation is simple: the monsters are where you live. The GM is encouraged to come up with additional variations on that answer, or at least some game-world explanation capable of withstanding moderate scrutiny – be that an interdimensional vortex, a meteor strike, or the curse of the dead autarch who ruled these lands millennia ago.

A localized campaign can harbor a whole battalion of horrors, if it's set in the sort of place where horrors happen; players are far more willing to believe in a lot of unrelated horrors in Victorian London or modern Los Angeles than in suburban Aurora, Illinois or some generic fantasy city. Fortunately, fiction is full of places where the horrors seem nonstop; e.g., Stephen King's Maine, H.P. Lovecraft's Miskatonic Valley, the Sunnydale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* and the Louisiana bayous of *Swamp Thing.* The real world also has no shortage of places packed with horrific history and legendry – London, Paris, New Orleans, Cairo, and Transylvania only scratch the surface. Any large American city can hold as many horrors as the ambitious GM can stuff into its alleys, steam tunnels, and warehouses; New York City, Chicago, and L.A. are all classic horror settings with enough variety that investigators of the horrific can never dare to leave.

The final advantages of the localized horror campaign are the psychological ones of implication and constraint. If everywhere the heroes go at home is full of horror, this implies that nowhere is safe, and that any knowledge (e.g., of a place's true nature or history) is *dangerous* knowledge. These are implications that the horror GM should eagerly exploit. The sense of constraint that comes from the localized campaign is the feeling of being imprisoned with Something Dangerous, writ larger and kept in the background. The investigators will wrestle against the city limits or county line without even knowing why they feel trapped.

Rural or Urban?

A potential dichotomy exists between rural and urban horror. Rural horror is the oldest type . . . the horror of the Wasteland, far from human contact. Cosmic and psychological horror seem to flourish with special poison here, where the insulation between protagonist and Outside is stripped to its thinnest.

Urban horror is a modern thrill. It goes back to the "penny dreadfuls" surrounding the Ripper murders – or, at its earliest, to Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" or "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." The horror in the city is that of alienation from humanity and of separation from truths (such as, ironically, nature). Urban horror's nature makes it fertile ground for monsters-as-characters games (p. 11) and stories in the paranoia-and-secret-war vein.

The growing fear of urban crime and the increasing suburbanization of the horror audience mean that the lines between rural and urban horror aren't as clear-cut as they once were. The "urban jungle" and the secluded toxic waste dump conspire to make *any* horror possible – whether in the heart of Texas or in the wilds of Manhattan.

Globetrotting

The globetrotting campaign trades the security and depth of the localized campaign for uncertainty and rootlessness, two especially modern fears. It's not surprising, then, that the majority of globetrotting horror adventure is set in the modern era – from the exotic pulp horrors of the 1920s, to the far-flung conspiracies of airport thrillers, to the "flyover country" horror-tourism of *Supernatural.* As the decades progress, exotic foreign terrors become oddly domesticated. Globetrotting began as adventure; nowadays, it's tourism. Plain Folks can stumble over monsters in a Mayan ruin during a backpacking jaunt, or be caught up in vampire cults on a routine business trip to Bucharest. Where Dracula took weeks to sail to London in 1897, he could catch a redeye and get there overnight today. The GM can derive horror from this weird familiarity, juice the game with ongoing jolts of "foreign-ness," or both.

The globetrotting campaign needs some form of rapid communication to let the investigators know about the evils festering across the continent or overseas.

Some Horrific Planes

These realms are suggestions only. Occultists rarely agree on cosmologies, so why should games of the uncanny? Tweak as needed to suit your narrative and maximize horrific gaming potential.

Astral Plane: This vast planar void (p. B521) connects all the other realms. It has normal mana, and – after a suitably long or dangerous journey – opens onto many other planes or even alternate Earths (usually via Bad Places). Most astral travelers are immaterial or composed solely of psionic energy. While on the astral plane, you cannot interact in any way with the material world and are invisible to those on it; you can only perceive the material plane dimly (-7 to Sense rolls) unless an "etheric window" (e.g., haunted house) is open from that realm. Skill rolls to use technological artifacts here are at -5 per item TL above TL4.

Etheric Plane: This world interpenetrating (p. B521) the material one is where you "go" when you turn insubstantial. Spirits "on Earth" are actually in the etheric plane, unless they materialize. Immaterial beings can fight or otherwise interact here, just as physical entities can in the material world. Psi and magic are at -3 to affect the material realm from here; other abilities need the Affects Substantial enhancement. In "etheric windows," like haunted houses or the space inside pentagrams, switching between planes is easier, requiring half FP cost or none at all!

Faërie: This is just one example of a "pocket dimension" or "demiplane," somehow smaller than the material or astral realm. A demiplane is usually one mana level higher than the material, often with special restrictions or bonuses to specific types of magic (One College Only, Song, etc.). Time flows differently, allowing the GM to arbitrarily advance any "ticking bombs" in the campaign background. Physically entering a demiplane may be as easy as standing in a stone circle when the stars are right, walking the wrong path through an enchanted wood, or stepping into an antique wardrobe. Such portals are the only places to cast magic or otherwise affect the material realm from a demiplane, or vice versa.

Hell: Home plane of demons, and the usual destination of damned and evil souls. It may comprise competing principalities, or writhe under one totalitarian Satan. Physically entering Hell usually involves going underground (traditionally through Lake Avernus in Italy), and is extremely dangerous. Hell has low mana, but critical failure at spellcasting there summons a demon – as does almost anything in Hell, really.

Hyperspace: This is the native (or prison) dimension of the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. It has high, even very high mana. Terrestrial, material life forms visiting hyperspace, physically or psychically, suffer a ceaseless rain of Fright Checks (at up to -8, perhaps worse); even looking into it or using Warp to teleport through it can trigger such panic. Fortunately, portals into it are vanishingly rare; e.g., only a few seconds wide on a specific Massachusetts hillside.

Nightmare: Powerful dream-lords or other entities (like Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*) can draw sleepers into a nightmare realm, either by luring them to sleep at a "soft spot" in reality or by brute-force kidnapping using some Jumper-related ability. The landscape constantly shifts into ever-more-horrifying menace. All skills use the *higher* of one's actual skill or Dreaming (p. B188). For much more detail, see *Dreamworlds* (p. 114).

Shadowland: A "dark etheric" plane, resembling a stark black-and-white version of the material world. Entities with Shadow Form are material here, and can use Area Knowledge (Shadowland) or Detect (Shadow Gates) to find gateways and shortcuts into the material realm through mystical patches of darkness. This may also be the "mirror realm," accessible through mirrors, or that may be its own demiplane. Shadowland has normal mana and is beset with invisible monsters.

Summerland: 19th-century Spiritualists invented this term for the place where ghosts lived, as opposed to the etheric plane (which spirits visited during séances) and Heaven (where "fulfilled souls" went on to their reward). From Summerland, you cannot see or interact with the material realm – that's what the etheric realm is for. Other, more depressing versions include the Hebrew *Sheol* and the Greek *Tartarus*. It also resembles the Tibetan *Bardo,* the "waiting room" between reincarnations; monsters with Unkillable 3 may wind up here. By any name, Summerland has low mana.

It also requires some sort of rapid transport to place the heroes rapidly and reliably on the forefront of the worldwide war against evil. Letting the action slow down for a four-month caravan trip or sailing voyage to the haunted temple is a sure way to let the steam out of any horror game.

Globetrotting need not be restricted to late historical or modern horror games, though. High-fantasy campaigns can use crystal balls and flying carpets (or magical gateways) to replace telegraphs and jets. Adventures set in the world's dreamlands – or that assume rapid astral travel – can do the same thing without requiring even the minimal time of conventional transport. A tolerant and cooperative group of players is likely to let the GM "fast forward" past long journeys in even the lowest of low-tech environments, and perhaps substitute prophetic visions for CNN. Wide-ranging *futuristic* globetrotting horror requires rather more development of the nature of the world(s) involved, but ultra-tech makes globetrotting a snap.

The advantages of the globetrotting game are variety and isolation. When many adventures' worth of horrors can be drawn from any corner of the world and scattered across four continents, the campaign is potentially thematically richer than one in which all the horrors come from Comanche legendry and occur in West Texas. Varying the types of monsters and their settings can also protect against a descent into formula. Variety builds believability, too. Spacing out the horrors geographically prevents the players from asking why their home base just happens to be Monster Capital of the Known World – although it does leave the GM to decide why evil just happens to lurk everywhere the party goes (see *Extended Campaigns and Plausibility,* pp. 99-100, for some answers).

Use this question to feed the protagonists' isolation. Thematically, the "dangerous knowledge" motif is only strengthened by having horrors manifest all around the world; the truism that "everywhere is dangerous" becomes far more obvious to players whose characters have, indeed, been everywhere. If everywhere is dangerous, nowhere is safe. The investigators are isolated from all normal society, since normal society (foolishly or blindly) believes that it's safe at home. This theme of isolated alienation is a powerful one in many styles of horror – cosmic, conspiratorial, and psychological horror in particular.

Across the Planes

Horror settings often benefit from extra planes of existence (pp. B519-522). Even the grittiest game of austere urban terror can have wild, surrealistic scenarios . . . in the dreamworld of one of the main characters. Plenty of haunted houses have "etheric windows" into the spirit world, and allowing or *forcing* intrepid ghost-hunters into the realm of the spectral undead can unlock a whole new range of options for terror – starting with the likelihood that the hunters are now the hunted. Or perhaps a local cemetery casts an "etheric shadow" back in time to the witch-trials that took place there on Gallows Hill, allowing creepy foreshadowing, visions, and (highly localized, dangerous, and completely GM-controlled) time travel. And what's the traditional "gate to Hell" but a dimensional rift?

With a dream realm, a spirit world, a shadow of the past, and the antechamber to Hell, you're already halfway to multi-planar gaming action – all without compromising your basic setting's reality. In fact, the high contrast between horrific planes and the material world can actually *increase* player identification of the game setting with "the real world." The key is to select realms that throw the campaign's horror into stark relief.

The GM must also determine how travel between realms works. Getting from plane to plane without specialized gateways and portals typically requires Plane Shift (p. B248) or Jumper (Spirit) (p. 16). Advantages such as Insubstantiality and Shadow Form – and modifiers like Projection (see *Insubstantiality,* p. 16, and *Jumper,* pp. 16-17) – may interact with other dimensions as well, at the GM's option.

Then there's the matter of the residents. Any realm might have natives. In horror, they're rarely friendly!

In short, horror cosmologies are highly campaign-specific. See *Some Horrific Planes* (p. 108) for examples that may provide inspiration.

Uncanny Powers

Capabilities above and beyond those of mortal men are crucial to almost all genres of RPGs, but they take center stage in horror games. After all, a central concern of horror is the "unnatural," that which violates the Way Things Should Be – something that magic, psionics, weird technology, etc. do with abandon. The trick in horror is to incorporate only those elements of the unnatural that the campaign can withstand, and to plan for their effects on the story, on the heroes' actions, and on the feel of the world itself.

Remember that the conventional assignment of fireballs to magic, mind control to psionics, and robot hands to black technology is just that: convention. Switching around power modifiers and applying a little judicious color can yield psionic pyrokinesis, memetic mesmerism, and a magical golem hand. Summoning ghosts might involve necromantic spells, psychic channeling, or a black NDOR app on an iPhone. Here as elsewhere, the unexpected is horror's ally.

Magic

In horror roleplaying, magic often plays an important role as a "rational" cause for supernatural events, or even as a tool to use against overpowering evil. In horror novels and films, magic is more typically portrayed as corrupting or malevolent (for rules that model this, see *Power Corrupts,* pp. 146-148). Spells don't just *occur* in these worlds of horror – they have a sickly green nimbus, drain the caster's life or sanity, or are gifts from dark gods or evil powers. While the heroes might wield "white magic," such as healing or light spells, it's possible that even the most benign spell is fraught with peril to body and soul, or that evil spells are the only ones available, emphasizing magic's unnatural (and usually horrifying) source. Thus, magic can be a weapon, a symptom, or the evil itself. The GM's choice here will strongly affect his campaign.

An equally important decision is that of magic's importance and prevalence: The *no-magic* campaign eliminates magic completely, the *secret-magic* campaign permits the PCs to learn a limited number of spells or other magical methods, and the *full-magic* campaign allows full-fledged magicians who wield most or all of the types of magic available in the game world.

The No-Magic Campaign

A no-magic campaign takes place in a world where magic simply doesn't exist. Not only the heroes but also their adversaries lack magical abilities. This requires rethinking the "magical" talents of many supernatural creatures.

Monsters that possess magical abilities (such as ghosts and vampires), or that can only be affected by magic, will strongly unbalance a no-magic campaign. The GM should modify such entities, making their powers psionic, deriving them from weird science (e.g., a mutant virus that causes "vampire" effects in its carriers), or even eliminating them altogether. Be aware that removing a ghost's powers renders it nearly useless as an adversary – although it can remain a terrifying "astral shadow" in the scenery – and that this goes for many other creatures as well. Thus, the no-magic campaign works best if the heroes' opponents are *physical:* revenants, genemod lycanthropes, androids, aliens, etc.

Another possibility is a grimly realistic campaign centered on horrors known to be real but ignored as uncomfortable, including serial killers, cults, and insanity; social alienation, street crime, and poverty; historical dreadfulness, such as atrocities and human sacrifice; scientific terrors, such as plagues and toxins; and brutal and error-prone conspiracies. This can be difficult to run for any length of time, but it makes an excellent "background reality" for a bleak or psychological horror campaign.

Players who prefer weapons to spells will enjoy the no-magic campaign, provided that the GM limits the presence of supernatural entities, most of which cannot be dealt with without some form of magic. However, psis will be able to cope with almost anything in the bestiary, provided that their attributes and Talents are high enough (see *Psionics,* pp. 111-112).

The Secret-Magic Campaign

This is arguably the best type of horror campaign, as it gives the heroes the ability to deal with the supernatural without allowing them to get too powerful. In the secret-magic campaign, there's usually a more restricted palette of magic available – possibly only a few low-powered or secretive spells. The PCs must have a good reason for knowing *any* magic; perhaps they're academicians, anthropologists, or professional occultists. At the GM's option, human wizards may require an Unusual Background, be subject to strict limits on Magery level, and/or be incapable of magic without the assistance of spirits or demons! Meanwhile, the supernatural creatures in Chapter 2 will enjoy all their usual magical abilities. More powerful or disturbing villains might know particularly vile spells from ***GURPS Magic;*** the Necromantic and Gate colleges offer many excellent examples.

Low power is *not* the crucial element in a secret-magic campaign. That element is, rather, approach: Magic is *hidden.* Used openly, it could get the magicians into trouble. This is perfect for an environment such as Renaissance Germany or colonial New England, where any practice of magic could be considered proof of witchcraft and punishable by death. Secret societies practice magic covertly, and magical texts aren't widely available to the public; thus, would-be wizards may be hard-pressed even to *find* the spells they wish to know.

Secret-magic campaigns – and campaigns with other types of secret horrors, from Cthulhu to vampires – are a type of *wainscot fantasy:* stories of a world concealed behind the walls of mundanity. The key to such games is the interface between the hidden and the visible, the occult and the mundane. Like the rats in the walls behind the wainscoting, horrors skitter about in society's blind spot, gnawing away unseen. The creative friction between the real world and the supernatural world of horror keeps the mundane in the foreground. Wainscot games sometimes switch repeatedly from high austerity (p. 106) in the "real world" to lenient austerity behind the walls and in the shadows.

That Old Black Magic

If the GM intends to make magic a major element of the campaign, ***GURPS Thaumatology*** has prepared much of the groundwork. That supplement offers a myriad of possible magic rules and variants, any of which might be tuned for horror in a specific game world. *Assisting Spirits* can easily replicate traditional demonic Goetia; the "coincidental" feel of *Paths and Books* lets you feed secret magical societies into conspiratorial horror games; and *Symbol Magic* can evoke M.R. James' "Casting the Runes" and many other horror standards besides. And really, the *Diabolic/Horrific Table* for spell backfires speaks for itself.

But whatever system you use for black magic, be it secret or overt, it must feel horrific to fit into a horror campaign. Some key principles to keep in mind:

Black magic is serious. Magic is never an afterthought or a whim. It requires investment of time and of physical energy, to say nothing of social credit or hard gold coin. Things that trivially use magic should be as scary as someone in our world who trivially uses plutonium.

Black magic is dangerous. Magic can kill you, even if you use it right! It is sheer power – of Satan, of Nature, of Cosmic Deities – imperfectly focused through weak, twistable flesh. It *will* have side effects, likely painful ones.

Black magic is uncanny. Even in the most overt full-magic campaign, mages shouldn't truly understand the powers they toy with. Magic can "go wild," or suddenly violate its principles, or just do something weird that nobody can figure out. Magic makes superstring theory look proven and reliable.

Black magic is scary. If it doesn't absolutely *require* the dark of the moon and a ruined crypt, it should still be far more powerful there. It's Bad Mojo, it's a taint on the universe, it's Just Not Right. Magic should have horrific spoor – foul stenches, stifling air, stampeding rat hordes, invisible cackling, bleeding from the eyes. If you aren't scared to use it to save your life, then it isn't black enough for horror.

Standard Magic Items

Horror features many stock magic items. Some examples appear below. The GM may use these "as is" or alter them to suit the campaign. Seldom starting gear, the PCs might acquire them in play.

Cross of Protection: This antique brass cross – 5" tall, on a heavy brass chain – contains Turn Zombie (p. B252) at Power 23 (becomes 18 in low mana). The user needn't understand magic to cast the spell; he need only prominently display the Cross and wish very hard that the zombie would leave. This might delude the naïve into believing that *all* crosses repel zombies!

Demon Candle: A 2'-tall, 6"-wide candle made of human tallow. Burned all the way down, it calls a demon to this plane. If the person who lit it is no longer present, the demon seeks him out. Roll a Quick Contest of Will between demon and summoner when they meet. If the summoner *wins,* the demon serves him. Otherwise, the demon . . . punishes him.

Mirrored Gate: This appears to be an ordinary full-length mirror in a somewhat baroque frame – but on rare nights (perhaps Walpurgisnacht, blue moons, or eclipses), it becomes a gateway to another plane (see *Across the Planes,* p. 109). Be careful, because the gate closes at dawn. And be sure not to let any Things follow you home . . .

Spirit Dagger: An ornate-but-dull knife with the power to wound ghosts as easily as a mundane dagger cuts mortals.

Tome of the Sorcerer: This ancient, leather-bound manuscript once bore a gold-stamped title, long since worn away. The spirit of a 16th-century sorcerer (IQ 16) is bound into the pages, and immediately attempts Possession (p. B75) on anyone reading the book. The GM decides the sorcerer's motives – but the book should be genuinely important to the heroes.

Voodoo Doll: This waxen image resembles its subject and incorporates some part of him: hair, fingernails, etc. It also contains Pain (p. B244). This spell only affects that one victim, but works at any range and is always on. To cause the subject pain, the witch pays *no* energy but must still win a Quick Contest of her Will or skill with the Pain spell vs. the target's HT.

Window to the Soul: This 4"-long prism contains the Aura spell (p. B249). The user looks through it at the subject, but need not pay energy or make a skill roll. Someone who doesn't know the item's properties is unlikely to recognize the hazy refracted image as a true aura . . . prisms do funny things with colors anyway.

It's possible for a secret-magic campaign to become a full-magic campaign. As the heroes develop and learn new spells, the GM must keep them on their toes by providing their adversaries with *better* spells. Without careful management, the GM will need to bring up the volume as the full-magic campaign takes over.

The Full-Magic Campaign

In this type of campaign, the full range of magical effects might appear: necromancy, improvised spells, clerical magic, the works. Both the heroes and their adversaries can become powerful wizards. This is true of most *fantasy* horror games, but any background where magic's existence is common knowledge – if not common practice – can support a full-magic campaign. Staging such a campaign in a historical setting makes for good "alternate history" roleplaying, as the forces of magic play important roles in historical events. ***GURPS Technomancer*** provides an example of a full-magic world of science and sorcery in a modern setting with plenty of potential for horror; Roma Arcana, in ***GURPS Fantasy,*** does much the same for ancient Rome.

PSIONICS

In modern horror, psionic powers have earned a place in the arsenal of heroes and villains alike. Psionic investigators ("sniffers"), often billing themselves as professional occultists, are common protagonists. Meanwhile, the misguided or vengeful psi (almost invariably a teenager) has been a staple of horror film and TV since the 1970s.

Psionic powers didn't enter the popular imagination until Franz Mesmer's demonstrations of "animal magnetism" in the late 18th century. Campaigns set in an earlier period can still allow psi abilities, but such gifts will most likely be perceived as witchcraft. For instance, the Biblical Witch of Endor is an example of what we would call a "spirit medium" today.

Redefining spirit contact as something different from magic – and as "science" in particular – began in earnest in the 1830s and 1840s, as the general public became aware of invisible physical forces such as electricity. This way of thinking spread and grew over the next century; "psychic investigation" was almost a legitimate science in the Victorian era, and psi research hit something of a high point (of funding, if not official acceptance) in the 1960s and 1970s. Even today, there remain several institutions dedicated to psi experimentation, and there have been real-world efforts by almost every major intelligence agency to use psionics for espionage. Likewise, psionic or at least quasi-scientific understandings of such phenomena as ghosts still dominate academic study and popular culture, from *Ghostbusters* on down to cable TV "haunted house" shows.

Horror campaigns involving psis can explore even wider areas of roleplaying when supernatural creatures are introduced. It's often better, or at least safer, to *communicate* with ghosts and other spirits than to attempt to defeat them. Especially at first, the GM will be more able to control the game's flow if the heroes' psi abilities aren't too powerful. The information-gathering and combat potential of psionics can easily derail any campaign if the GM is unprepared.

Psi abilities can generally be divided along hero/adversary lines, with "soft" powers such as Anti-Psi, ESP, Psychic Healing, and Telepathy suited to the PCs, and "hard" or violent ones such as Psychokinesis and Teleportation reserved for their foes. ***GURPS Psionic Powers*** offers still more options (as does ***GURPS Psionic Campaigns***). Specific abilities and power levels may result in some overlap in each area. For instance, some of the nastier Telepathy abilities, such as Mind Control and Possession, definitely belong to the villains in a cinematic game. On the other hand, in the movie *Scanners,* the heroes and villains have identical psi powers, and only their motives differ – a strikingly "realistic" use of psi, and of horror.

Black Technology

As Clarke's Third Law reminds us, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. Secret, "black" tech – defined as technology that isn't commonly available or public knowledge in the campaign world – has given intrepid horror-hunters an edge ever since the winged sandals and invisibility cap of Perseus in Greek myth. From alchemical "handgonnes" manufactured by Swiss dwarves in a fantasy game to dimensional distorters that translate CIA agents into the dream realm, "black tech" is just another way to say "magic item," without the baggage (or mana dependence) of enchantment.

Black tech can appear in any setting more advanced than TL0, but it really comes into its own in TL5 game worlds; steampunk mad science can create many intriguing devices suitable for use even in no-magic horror campaigns set in the Victorian period. Modern-day games can feature super-spy equipment, cutting-edge weapons from the next TL, or possibly "psychotronic" gizmos that reproduce, enhance, suppress, or otherwise affect psi powers. Even in a world of open magic use, secret technology might be under construction or issued exclusively to elite teams of counter-monster operatives.

The presence of black technology in a campaign generally works directly to enhance the sense of empowerment of both the heroes and humanity at large. Broadly, such tech represents reason, which is seldom horrific. On the other hand, ever since *Frankenstein,* gifted horrorists have presented black technology that actually subverts reason and decency; making sure that the black ops know (or better yet, simply hinting at) what kind of research produced the Sleep Inversion Field will go a long way toward rekindling that all-important sense of unease in the players. Extraterrestrial or *unhuman* technology, with concomitantly uncanny side effects, can even enhance the alienation and dread of cosmic horror – especially if the investigators must unleash some dread eldritch radiation to stop a radiation-spawned Thing That Must Not Be.

Other Abilities

Cinematic martial-arts training, spirit command, superpowers, Imbuement Skills (from ***GURPS Power-Ups 1***), and similar abilities beyond those of normal men can unbalance campaigns predicated on the heroes' vulnerability – including many horror games. At their fullest extension, in a wide-ranging supers campaign, horror becomes fairly difficult, although by no means impossible (see *Supers,* pp. 117-118). Paranormal capabilities need not be an all-or-nothing proposition, however. The GM might allow such gifts at a low level, capping exotic advantages (pp. B32-33) at 20 points and vetoing flashy, four-color ones like Shrinking and Stretching.

Things Fall Apart

A very common horror trope is the failure of human technology – of reason, in other words – in the face of the supernatural. From the compass that spins wildly in the haunted house, to Lovecraft's "non-Euclidean geometries" that baffle cameras and rangefinders, to the uncanny tendency of ghost-hunters to over-expose film, burn out flashlights, and so forth, horror is bad for your gear.

There are many ways to model this. Ghosts often possess Telekinesis or the equivalent; using this to smash the investigators' equipment is always worth the effort. Other possibilities include Temperature Control (for engines and heat-sensitive computer components), Obscure (against cameras, sensors, etc.), and Mind Control modified with Cybernetic or Cybernetic Only (to hocus anything with a chip in it – meaning pretty much *every* gadget at TL8+). Alternatively, simply go with almost any sort of Affliction limited with Accessibility, Only on Electrical (-20%), from Hallucinating ("it just started printing gibberish"), to Seizure ("it just started shooting out smoke"), to Heart Attack ("it just quit").

The GM can also rule that the "anti-technology field" of the supernatural is a purely environmental effect that penalizes Computer Operation, Electronics Operation, Photography, and similar skills. Some options to mix and match:

In any Bad Place and anywhere a supernatural entity lurks: -1
Per -1 to Fright Checks the entity causes, with or without Terror: -1
Per TL the machine is above TL4: -1
Per 2 FP a nearby supernatural being spends on paranormal abilities: -1

Rigorously enforce the resulting critical failures! Circuits blow out, fuses melt, and gadgets malfunction, eat batteries, or catch fire. Before long, the PCs will pack nothing but crowbars and shotguns full of rock salt, the way the good Lord intended.

This can replicate a "pulp sensibility" suitable for pulp horror games that feature heroes who can cloud men's minds or bend horseshoes in their bare hands, yet who remain suitably vulnerable to tentacular horrors from the jungles of the Yucatan.

The other way to introduce these capabilities into a horror game is to *make them horrific*. Add limitations such as a Trigger that requires the hero to drink human blood, or a Nuisance Effect like "Attracts ghosts." Balance points in special gifts with an equal weight of unpleasant disadvantages. Require a Fright Check – from bystanders, or even from the super! – whenever the abilities are used. If every superhuman capability in the campaign comes with such drawbacks, or springs from unholy energies, then the heroes may decide to track down the source of their uncanny powers in order to rid themselves of their terrifying (albeit occasionally useful) curse!

Horrifying Genres

In a very real sense, horror isn't a genre in itself, but a feeling, a flavor, or a goal. The "default" horror campaign involves supernatural monsters preying on the innocent in a relatively modern setting (horror fiction, intended solely and explicitly as such, goes back only to 1764), but horror is where you find it – and where you put it. From the Westerns of Joe R. Lansdale to the fantasy of Robert E. Howard, from Charles Stross' Lovecraftian espionage stories to Ridley Scott's *Alien,* horror transcends genre. You can mix horror into any game, whether as a single scenario in a campaign of adventure or romance, or as a full ingredient present in every note of the background and storyline. You can openly announce a "horror detective game," or covertly sneak horror into a rousing samurai epic (see *Adding Horror In,* p. 132). The fundamental elements (pp. 121-123) of horror have held up for millennia, after all; there's no reason why traditional horror styles and themes (pp. 123-128) can't appear in any given milieu or time period.

Fantasy Horror

The great strength of the fantasy campaign as a horror campaign is the capacity for design that the GM enjoys. In theory, every element of the fantasy world can be built to support the ambiance of horror and the fears, monsters, effects, and themes that the GM wants to highlight. This allows a great unity of tone that goes a long way toward building the proper atmosphere.

The fantasy campaign's great weakness as a horror campaign is that the world is harder to believe for the players. Horror depends upon emotional involvement for its power. If the players haven't accepted the world or anyone in it as "real" for the purposes of the game, then they won't be as frightened of its horrors or as concerned for its inhabitants.

The cure for this weakness is to concentrate on fantasy's strengths. Not only can the GM construct the world to his particular specifications, he can build it as deep as needed to involve the players mentally and emotionally. This is part of why character hooks (pp. 6-8) – and character backgrounds in general – are exceptionally useful in fantasy games.

While there are many different flavors of fantasy, most fall within one of the types discussed below.

High Fantasy

High fantasy is the subgenre with which most roleplayers are instinctively familiar. Indeed, many gamers regard dragons, wizards, elves, and the whole arsenal of fantasy tropes from Tolkien and others as the defaults for an RPG. High fantasy can be turned to horror, but retaining and using its fundamentals while still providing fear for the players and genuine challenges for the characters isn't easy. As with science-fiction horror (pp. 118-119), the elements of the genre tend to make the protagonists *powerful,* and powerful heroes are, realistically, harder to threaten – especially more than once.

To succeed, the GM should make every effort to craft the horrors to involve the adventurers *emotionally,* regardless of whether they're *physically* threatening. One of the conventions of high fantasy is that powerful wizards or mighty warriors end up as kings. Remember that a horror that threatens the lowliest peasants in the kingdom indirectly threatens their rulers.

In a standard high-fantasy world, many powerful monsters, villains, or magics can threaten the heroes in a more conventional sense; the key is to make these not merely dangerous, but also *horrific*. This might be as simple as turning the Great Dragon into the Great Skeleton Dragon. By itself, that's a fairly unpleasant image. Now combine the Great Skeleton Dragon with the themes of plague, famine, and pestilence. Give the Dragon armies of rats and locusts to command, poisonous breath, and undead servitors made of the dried husks of starvation victims – and let its breath magically poison wells and cause horrible creatures to emerge from the tainted ground. Put its lair in a miasmal swamp, a vast graveyard, or even the famine-depleted towers of a once-mighty city. Now you have a set of horrific images that even the hardiest warrior or most devout cleric might find daunting!

Any standard fantasy element can be made horrific in this fashion. High-fantasy horror demands creativity of execution on the GM's part, but it's far from impossible to carry out.

Low Fantasy

As the name implies, low fantasy is the "low-level" version of standard high fantasy. This type of campaign is popular with gamers seeking more personalized challenges than high-powered fantasy can offer. As it happens, these are almost exactly the challenges that horror games present. Thus, low fantasy is an admirable match for horror gaming.

The low-fantasy campaign can be set in a high-fantasy world where the adventurers are far less powerful than the other actors. The scope is narrow, often using a localized campaign structure – for instance, to keep the party in the Thieves' Quarter of a mighty city. Low-fantasy protagonists tend to operate on the prosaic scale, stealing gems from the Temple of the Rat God rather than cleansing the world of his foul worship. The GM must craft an enticing setting to bring off low fantasy well. If players come to like and know their characters and the world, then they'll willingly sacrifice some flexibility in options or scope for the chance to play in that particular background.

Even at high power levels, the heroes can be *capable* without being *godlike*. Magic cannot lay waste to whole cities – or, for that matter, to whole squads of orcs – and the most puissant warrior is still hard-pressed by four or five brigands. Such "grim and gritty" or "realistic" fantasy makes an excellent match with historical fantasy, too.

Dreamworlds

Dreamworlds are a fairly odd subset of fantasy. Such a world might be the shared unconscious of all human dreamers, the Place Where Dreams Come From, or even the dreaming mind of one person. It may feature individual "dream theaters," with a common archetypal "backstage" Dreamland surrounding them. The form it takes is completely up to the GM, and can vary without warning. One minute, the adventurers are in a nightmare about high school; the next, they're fighting for their lives against vampires in a black desert. This mutability plays well with high levels of surrealism (p. 123), and can be the trigger for a lot of horrific effects.

If all dreamers share one Dreamland, or find their way into the underlying archetypal realm, then dreamers may meet each other and even have adventures together. Thus, dreamworld horror presents great opportunities for fans of cross-genre gaming. The heroes need not hail from the same home milieu, either. Dreamers might enter Dreamland in a variety of ways: shamanic vision quests, psychotronic supercomputers, hypnotic pendants, etc. In a campaign set in a shared dreamworld, the GM can permit almost any kind of PC, from a medieval monk, to a 1920s psychic, to a 23rd-century psychonaut.

Dreamworlds don't *have* to shift capriciously. The GM and/or the campaign source material can lay down the "Laws of Dream," or simply state that the archetypal unconscious doesn't shift much over time. H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands, for instance, don't alter radically; it's the quality of the imagery and the picaresque elements of the narrative that give them their dreamlike feeling.

The horror GM running many adventures set in dreamworlds has to walk a fine line: He must convincingly convey a dream's uncanny, surreal atmosphere while giving the players a plotline that they can grasp firmly enough to advance the action. The players need *some* reason to involve their characters in an environment that, almost by definition, doesn't play fair or make a lot of sense.

Historical Horror

The typical historical campaign is actually another type of fantasy game, sometimes called *historical fantasy*. The adventures take place on Earth in the historical past, but with the covert addition of the supernatural and magic, as in the secret-magic campaign (pp. 110-111). This is also known as a *secret history* campaign; historians rarely address magic and supernatural occurrences, and those who do typically explain away such things as legend, coincidence, and superstition. Most historical horror novels are secret histories, although some are more closely tied to real people and events than others. Secret history is easier to run in a low-fantasy environment, and that's how most historical campaigns turn out. Gamers interested in historical horror can capitalize on existing ***GURPS*** *Third Edition* worldbooks (easily used with *Fourth Edition*) to cut out all the tedious research and get right to the gore.

Dreamland: One Rules Model

A dreamer who knows Dreaming (p. B188) can use it to search the depths of his own mind. Attempts to visit deeper levels beneath individual dreams – for instance, a collective unconscious or an archetypal realm – require rolls at -5. Once in Dreamland, make a skill roll for one dreamer to find a specific location or another dreamer. Individuals who share a Mindlink or a Special Rapport have +2 to locate one other.

There are other ways to enter another person's dreams. A wizard can send a message via Dream Sending or a projection of himself using Dream Projection – or cast Dream Viewing on a sleeper to see his dream-realm and then visit it bodily with a suitable Plane Shift spell (p. B248). Psi abilities offer other options: Mind Reading permits passive viewing of a sleeping person's dreams; Telesend allows implanting one's own words or image in others' dreams; and Mind Probe can uncover things that a waking person recently dreamed. A psi or a mage who has entered someone else's dreams can use Dreaming there, but suffers -2 for unfamiliarity.

If a single, shared dreamworld exists, then Insubstantiality (with Projection, p. 16) or Jumper (Spirit) (p. 16) may enable a waking person to visit it, becoming a being of dream substance or projecting his consciousness into such a form. If each dreamer has a separate world, then these advantages grant entry into *any* dreamer's individual dreamland. In a stage/backstage setup, universal access grants backstage privileges! To restrict admission to only one specific dreamer's dreamland, apply an Accessibility limitation worth -80%.

For dream spells, see ***GURPS Magic.*** For a Dream Control psi power and other dream-related psi abilities, consult ***GURPS Psionic Powers.***

GURPS Egypt

Ancient Egypt represents a particularly ripe segment of history. Its myths of life after death, dismembered gods, and the unknown beast that the dark god Set used as his mask are all guaranteed to creep the flesh of any modern gamer. Egypt is the origin of our tales of ghouls, mummies, and curses of the dead.

GURPS Greece

Ancient Greece is another setting familiar to gamers. The problem is that Greek myth was polished for millennia to remove the sordid bloodthirstiness that makes for good horror gaming. Between the mad female cultists of Dionysos, the mutilation of the corn god Kronos, and the various *chimerae* and Gorgons lurking over every ridge, however, there's plenty of raw material available. It just takes a little digging.

GURPS Imperial Rome

Ancient Rome, too, is well-known to gamers. Like Egypt, it has the advantage of being associated with particularly gruesome and memorable events. Gladiatorial games, mad Emperors, and vile secretive cults are all excellent fodder for horror. The Roman legends of ghosts, necromancy, and blood magic also make superior fear-fertilizer.

GURPS Middle Ages 1

Medieval horror is usually the grimiest and grittiest possible "low fantasy," with heretical cults and plagues aplenty. That said, Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness* demonstrates that such horror can be played with brio and over-the-top monstrousness, while the Templars provide a fine dark-fantasy villain (or patron) for pulp or even cosmic horror games.

GURPS Arabian Nights

"Arabian Nightmare" horror has been a steady, if minor, stream in horror fiction since William Beckford's Gothic novel *Vathek,* set in the palace of the lord of the evil djinn. Medieval adventurers can encounter the djinn, ghuls, and other haunts of the desert while on Crusade (Dracula became a vampire while fighting the Turks slightly later than this period), or the whole campaign can take place in the lands of Islam.

GURPS Swashbucklers

In addition to the requisite pirates and musketeers, the "swashbuckling era" contains a number of elements of interest to the horror GM. With the opening of the world during the Age of Exploration, the main themes of pulp horror and Things From Beyond come alive. Most of the actual legends of vampires – including Elizabeth Báthory, the Blood Countess of Hungary – occur during this period. The piratical wars over the Caribbean are rich territory for ***GURPS Voodoo*** campaigns (and for *Seas of Dread,* pp. 150-156). Real-life Satanism existed in Louis XIV's Versailles, the Great Witch Hunt was in full swing throughout the era, and London's aristocratic Hell-Fire Club practiced black magic (or at least decadent orgies) suitable for games of conspiracy and high intrigue.

GURPS Steampunk

Many of the classics of horror literature are set in Victorian England (or its immediate successor, Edwardian England). The works of Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, William Hope Hodgson, Arthur Machen, M.R. James, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – along with such real-life horrors as Jack the Ripper (p. 70) – have made Victorian England an archetypal horror setting. In truth, it almost seems to have been designed to serve as one. The stark contrasts between the polite society of the rich elites and the Darwinian struggles of the poor can support nearly any kind of horror beneath the surface. The vast British Empire can bring home horror from anywhere in the world. Advances in technology are only outpaced by such beliefs as spiritualism, racial memory, and the occultism of the Golden Dawn (all ideal subjects for horror games).

Victorian horror can be played in any style. Splatter-minded GMs can explore the killings of Red Jack. Pulp horrors or dreamworld hallucinations might swarm from the opium dens of Limehouse. Conspiracy horror flourishes here with the beginnings of the military-industrial complex (or Communism, UFOs, or any number of menaces born in the Victorian world) and the machinations of the Freemasons (or vampires, Theosophical master races, or other suitably pedigreed Secret Masters). Cosmic horror can sit on the hills behind Stonehenge and even older structures, as new scientific knowledge – from Lyell's geology to Darwin's evolution – yet again upsets Man's comfortable view of himself as meaningful to the universe. *Blood in the Craters* (pp. 157-161) presents just one possible Victorian horror setting, with notes of conspiracy, cosmic horror, splatter, and pulp.

The amount of source material – both historical and horrific – is overwhelming but summarized well in ***GURPS Steampunk,*** with specific attention to the world of weird technology and bizarre exploration. Enough modern authors have discovered, emphasized, or created similarities between Victorian England and our own time that almost any modern horror campaign can be set in the last decades of the 19th century as easily as the first decades of the 21st.

GURPS Old West

The Western genre is one with which every gamer is at least roughly familiar. Since combining the familiar with the uncanny is the very soul of the horror experience, horror and the West go well together. The Western horror game can be run much like any other historical horror campaign; transplanting vampires, werewolves, and other horror tropes to the Old West is certainly possible and often successful.

The epic, almost mythic themes of the Western present the GM with an opportunity for something grander, however. From the alienation and psychological horror possibilities inherent in the "lone gunslinger" archetype to the cosmic horror and desolation that can come from examining the intrusion of civilization into Lands Where It Does Not Belong, the myths of the Western can easily be seen in darkened, frightful colors. The casual acceptance of deadly violence can become a horror theme in its own right.

Indians can be seen as elements of the Gothic "wildness" (as Hawthorne, among others, saw them) or as the ultimate innocents, crushed by forces they can barely comprehend. The conventional John Ford Western theme of the protection of the innocent and the corruption of violence is almost a Gothic in itself. Finally, the collapse of the Southern slave plantation culture gave rise to both the "Southern Gothic" horror subgenre and many rootless wanderers with psychological scars – in other words, ideal character types.

The Western environment is also rich with unique elements that are easily turned into specialized horror tropes: the traveling medicine show, the abandoned mineshaft, the riverboat and the mournful train whistle, San Francisco's mysterious Chinatown (and a town named Tombstone), and of course the whole concept of the ghost town.

GURPS Cliffhangers

The interwar period (1918-1939) was the great era of the pulp magazines – and the greatest of them was "The Unique Magazine," *Weird Tales*, spiritual home of Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and H.P. Lovecraft. The work of Einstein and Shapley (and the carnage of WWI) had destroyed the 19th century's confidence in natural law, and Lovecraft exploited those new fears (and others) in his work. He broke horror out of clanking chains and sheeted forms, and flung it into the modern world of airplanes, wire-recordings, and non-Euclidean mathematics to deal with alienation, isolation, and knowledge that can – and does – destroy sanity and convention. This cosmic horror redefined and revolutionized the genre.

On a more boisterous note, the great social leveling of the era swept aside much of the taste for genteel or traditional Victorian horror. The jaded 20th century demanded horrors deeper, richer, and more modern. Monsters became more exotic; mysticism, more lurid; and action, more brutal. This mix – mined to perfection by Robert E. Howard – became the basis for what we now call pulp horror (p. 124). Simultaneously, the new artistic medium of film began to create horrors of its own, and from the expressionist menace of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) to the lurid delights of *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) came pulp horror's cousin, "cinematic" horror.

The history of the pulp era is also a natural for horror campaigning. Prohibition turned millions of people into criminals overnight and created an underground syndicate that thrived on murder and violence. The second great era of archaeology was opening, and the far corners of the world were being explored – a natural source for armies of Things From Beyond. Spiritualism and "ghost-hunting" were even more popular in the 1920s than they were in the 1890s, as millions tried to communicate with loved ones lost in the Great War. Weimar Germany provided a decadent backdrop for expressionist horrors of shifting reality, as well as conspiracies and secret societies aplenty (foremost among them those perfect game villains: the Nazis).

In the horror of expressionism, urban horror comes into its own. The city has become too big for any human mind to encompass – perhaps a cosmic entity or a sort of god, but something far beyond a village, where you can know every inhabitant, or a town, where you can know the name of every street. Cities contain more mysteries than any one person could *ever* know. They draw people like magnets, making those who should be happy where they are leave everything behind and run away. In 1920s literature, great cities (especially New York and Chicago in the U.S., and Berlin in Germany) lurk like enormous ghosts within the fabric of every urban building and every urban life. These metropolises function literally as higher beings – kabbalistic spirits who might either grant all our wishes or crush us.

Horror Across Time

The traditional time-travel story has rarely been used for horror, at least not openly. Which is odd, given that time-travelers create horrors (Nazi victories or worse), erase their own histories (psychological horror fodder aplenty), become lost and isolated in strange times, and get stuck "between frames" as temporal ghosts and shadows, unable to influence anyone to do anything and helpless to stop the oncoming horror.

Time travel also makes an excellent mechanism for joining many different aspects of historical horror in the same game. A time-travel campaign in which the heroes battle Egyptian mummies, medieval Unseelie, and Victorian black magicians – each on their own turf – would be globetrotting horror (pp. 107-109) on a tremendous scale. ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** presents a ready-made campaign frame for such a game, The Order of the Hourglass, along with much good advice for the GM interested in *any* sort of time-travel campaign. As well, time travel can serve as the linking mechanism for a long-running conspiracy game, or be played for purest pulp.

The eons-long scale of cosmic horror makes time travel an excellent source of horrors – the mayfly span of human history can be brought home to the players simply by direct personal comparison. At higher levels of unreality, horrors from outside time itself can easily appear in any year. If the Thing controlling the travelers' journey through time is also the hideous evil they're trying to stop, the GM has a lot of potential for horrifying developments.

A variant of time-traveling horror is to have the same group of players take on the roles of characters in campaign arcs a century or more apart. They might be aristocratic dabblers in Forbidden Knowledge in antebellum New Orleans in one arc; their angst-ridden descendants or reincarnations in pulp-era Europe in the next; and end up in cyberpunk Japan in the mid-21st. The villain in each arc can be part of the same ancient conspiracy – or even be the same individual (e.g., a vampire or an immortal black magician).

GURPS World War II

Another rich historical era for horror is WWII itself. Even the most pulp-loving GM will be hard-pressed to find a clearer struggle between Good and Evil on which to base a campaign. At the same time, the forces of Good have enough dark sides (from Stalin to Hiroshima) for the most psychologically subtle explorations of human – or inhuman – evil. This vast moral range leads to a broad spectrum of horrific themes to work with. A WWII horror campaign need not concern itself with deep themes, though. A vampire awakened by the invasions of Transylvania, or an OSS mission against the Nazi *Werwolf* resistance that uncovers real werewolves, can provide "conventional" horror thrills aplenty against the vast backdrop of the war. See ***GURPS WWII: Weird War II*** for more possibilities.

GURPS Atomic Horror

The general message of 1950s and 1960s B-movies was surprisingly nuanced, despite its black-and-white presentation: Science creates horrors that only science can put down – but putting them down simply breeds new horrors in their stead. The natural temptation is to game out such tales in a silly style, as pure camp (or at least as pulp horror). That's certainly workable and fun, but it gives short shrift to the subject matter. Conspiratorial horror would be just as fitting, as fears of radiation and fallout invisibly poisoning bodies were easily transferred to fears of invasion by Communists and/or shapeshifting aliens. Cosmic horror, too, is a natural outgrowth of many B-movies, from ancient survivals like the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* to the malevolent alien races in and cosmic scale of such movies as *Five Million Years to Earth.* The UFO lore of the 1950s – "a modern myth of things seen in the sky," to quote Carl Jung – presents even more opportunity for both approaches.

Modern-Day Horror

The modern-day horror campaign can be seen as either a low-tech version of the science-fiction campaign (pp. 118-119) or a disproportionately broad take on the historical one (pp. 114-117). Thus, the advice to GMs of *both* types of games applies: "Avoid letting the heroes have more power than the horrors they must fight," and, "Know your background material well."

The modern era can potentially place vast amounts of firepower, equipment, and information at the fingertips of occult investigators. The GM should make sure that the availability of each is no higher than he intends it to be; taking guns and computers away from high-tech vampire-slayers isn't as easy as taking candy from a baby, but it elicits much the same reaction from the players. This isn't to say that the heroes of contemporary horror campaigns should be kept unarmed and ignorant. Much of the kick of modern gaming comes from the realization that all the ammunition and megabytes in the world cannot stop a truly *determined* horror. Much of the enjoyment comes from trying.

Knowing the material is easier in this kind of campaign; most modern horror novels and nearly all contemporary horror movies are set in the present. The GM can research such trivia as business hours, travel times, prices, and the top speeds of vehicles far more easily for a modern setting than for any other. Even his wild guesses will be closer, since he's extrapolating from his own environment and personal experience. The flipside is that errors or unbelievable moments can break suspension of disbelief faster, because the players, too, have a better intuitive grasp on what's plausible in the real world – even a version of "the real world" that contains mind-controlling aliens or emo vampires.

Two popular subsets of modern horror gaming are discussed below. Neither *has* to be set in recent times, but that has become the customary default.

Conspiracy

The conspiracy campaign plays on the fears of alienation and isolation that much modern horror evokes, and combines these with some of humanity's oldest fears: those of observation and stalking. When further compounded with some feared Other (godless Communists, brainwashed assassins, faceless corporations, Grey aliens, occult secret societies, etc.), conspiratorial horror flowers in all its poisonous glory. Conspiracy literature and mythology flourish in times of great social change, when people seek reasons – even frightening ones – for the turmoil in their lives. The modern age is one such time, and most conspiratorial horror games are set in the present.

Many common horror elements mesh nicely with conspiracy themes: the Unseelie lurk among us, the power of black magic corrupts (as does *all* power), nobody can tell who the werewolf is, and the Conspiracy is trying to turn us all into zombies. The vampire is a classic conspiratorial villain – a rich foreigner who lives by invisibly draining the lifeblood of decent people everywhere. The inspired GM can easily give a conspiratorial touch to other monsters and horror themes, from mummies with alien implants to secret military weather-control stations that always make the nights around the base Gothically dark and stormy.

Paranoia is an important feature of the conspiratorial horror campaign, but it need not be the only feature or even the central one. Pulp-style horror, for example, can root out conspiracies with only a tinge of paranoia attached to them (as in Sax Rohmer's "Fu Manchu" novels). Conspiratorial horror can be used metaphorically in a psychological horror game, or can be the framework of a surreal dark-fantasy campaign (such as ***GURPS Cabal***). Even cosmic horror melds with conspiracy, if the Secret Masters are something other than human. Indeed, the sole comfort of the conspiracy myth is that someone cares about your fate, even if they're malevolent. In a cosmic horror conspiracy game, the invisible machinery crushes the protagonists by accident.

For a book-length discussion of the themes, modes, and methods of conspiratorial roleplaying, see ***GURPS Illuminati.***

Supers

Like the mighty warriors and powerful wizards of high fantasy (p. 113), supers are hard to threaten and harder to frighten. Low-powered supers are easier to scare, and essentially the protagonists of many pulp horror adventures, but they're far from the more common four-color mold. Full-on super-powered horror campaigns are tricky to run.

An individual scenario in such a game might be scary, especially if the heroes have lost their powers or are in their secret identities – but if *every* session sees the supers mysteriously lose their powers only to be trapped in a haunted house, then the players will quickly lose interest. To run a successful super-powered horror campaign requires techniques similar to those used in high-fantasy horror: involve the heroes in the horror even if it doesn't threaten them directly, restrain their powers for some plausible reason, or simply make the villains really, really scary. See *High-Powered Horror* (pp. 104-105) for more general advice.

Unconventional horror styles often work better than "standard" horror in a supers campaign. A psychological horror game may find supers even more prone to doubt and self-loathing than normal people, who don't have the outlet of being able to fly. Insanity might make supers more plausibly vulnerable, and scare them more effectively, than it does "normals." Cosmic horror could simply outclass the heroes. Conspiratorial horror might pit them against other supers – or simply leave them unsure of whom their targets are.

A popular variant of super-powered horror is the monsters-as-characters campaign (p. 11). Entities such as vampires, werewolves, and ghosts traditionally have powers on par with those of many supers. Placing them in a world full of other supers who aren't seen as horrible monsters by everyone around them might point up their plight even more convincingly. It would certainly give them no shortage of suitably strong opponents!

GURPS Supers helps immensely in building the kind of "realistic" world upon which effective horror depends.

Science-Fiction Horror

It can be difficult to run a satisfactory horror game in the science-fiction environment. Many elements of science fiction tend to increase the power and options available to the protagonists, while horror's interest seemingly lies in limiting them. To keep the sense of speculative dread alive, the GM must use the genre's strengths against the players.

Computers can correlate information that has extremely disturbing implications. Psi powers can provide another way to perceive things that shouldn't be perceived. New planets can be Bad Places indeed. A spaceship can be a horrifying hunting ground for malevolent aliens – or a haunt for conventional ghosts, if it's a derelict lost for centuries in a dark nebula. New technologies can create new monsters and new problems. Cloning, braintaping, and similar advances might enable novel and sophisticated forms of psychological horror, or just raise the bar for traditional paranoia. Many people find the simple message of dehumanization in some science fiction frightening enough that it can profitably become the centerpiece for a horror game; after all, that was one of the themes of that science-fiction classic, *Frankenstein*.

A complementary tactic is to take away the heroes' technological crutches. If the power and computer outlets on the ghost-haunted derelict ship are incompatible with the salvagers' equipment, then the PCs are suddenly restricted to their wits and guts. There's no reason to believe that vampires are any more vulnerable to blasters than to bullets, and horrific Things Man Was Not Meant To Know are the very negation of all that scientific progress represents. In the end, it comes down to matching the threat to the party, as with all horror – and if the threat has to be escalated, well, the GM has entire universes to draw upon.

Cyberpunk

The "true" ancestor of the cyberpunk subgenre is the hard-boiled noir thriller, but the overlap between cyberpunk and horror is natural. Both present vast powers that are either uncaring or actively malevolent, both deal with the struggle to remain human against sometimes overwhelming odds, and both have sharply conflicted attitudes toward technology. Of course, cyberpunk isn't really about any kind of reasonable future – it's a metaphorical look at the present. As such, once the GM has found or developed a suitable cyberpunk world, it's no harder (and thanks to the exaggerations of the metaphor, possibly *easier*) to use cyberpunk as the basis for a horror game than it is to run a modern-day horror game. And cyberpunk horror, like the modern kind, can be played in standard "modern monsters" mode or in any of the more specialized styles.

Splatter-style horror, for example, shares much of cyberpunk's metaphorical baggage . . . so much so that some splatter novelists refer to themselves as "splatterpunks." For instance, both cyberpunk and splatter writers argue that stylistic excess and a voyeuristic love of appearances (even, or especially, unpleasant ones) are essential components of "truthful" writing. Pulp-style cyberpunk horror can be achieved by playing up the link between cyberpunk and noir fiction: the loner (or group of loners) walking the thin line between the law and the criminal world. In horror, he walks the thin line between the innocent and the monstrous. Psychological horror is a natural for cyberpunk, and the omnipresent bionic or genetic modifications make monsters-as-characters (p. 11) a viable style as well – perhaps "real" vampires can wander openly through a world of genemod pseudo-vamps. The conventions of cosmic horror only reinforce cyberpunk's bleak outlook and message of alienation. Finally, many of the operating assumptions of conspiratorial horror and cyberpunk are the same, from the super-powerful military-industrial complex to the omnipresent surveillance equipment.

Transhuman Horror

What cyberpunk fiction was to the 1980s, the "transhumanist" subgenre is to the new century: a way to grapple with the increasingly alien present. Where cyberpunk retains older SF's focus on material and technology, transhumanism looks at a world where the big questions are spiritual and philosophical. What is sentience? Where is it located? Are any of *us* sentient? Are *we* located anywhere?

In an age of instantaneous communication, CGI illusion, and globally distributed knowledge, cutting-edge developments in any field from cosmology to finance are completely incomprehensible to the layman – when they're not being digitally distorted for political or economic gain. Thus, we almost return to a 16th-century world of "airy spirits" and desperate doubt. Only with better flatscreens.

The horror of the 21st century so far veers wildly between splatter-style "torture porn," like *Hostel* and *Saw,* and the psychological-horror "ghost in the machine" stories of J-horror (p. 126) and their American remakes. Transhuman fiction likewise features bizarrely physical genemods alongside purely immaterial AIs and uploaded consciousnesses, with just a hint of soft apocalypse for proper post-millennial panic. Alienation from science continues to drive cosmic horror (Lovecraft is booming in the new millennium as well), and if the new century's terrorism and economic nightmares don't let pulp flower, then it won't be without trying. ***Transhuman Space*** provides a setting for all these concerns, played out against the brave new world of 2100 A.D.

Post-Apocalypse

Many classics of horror fiction draw not only their power but also their backdrop from civilization's destruction. The post-apocalypse story itself depends on the "horrible amid the familiar" that much "straight" horror tries to invoke. In some horror novels, such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend,* the horror causes the end of civilization; in others, such as William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land,* it merely blossoms among the ruins.

As a setting for horror roleplaying, the post-apocalypse subgenre demands less work than most science fiction. Only the Big Disaster (or Disasters) needs to be worked out in any kind of consistent detail, since the world is almost always near-future Earth. For some sample Big Disasters, see ***GURPS Autoduel, GURPS Reign of Steel,*** and ***GURPS Y2K.*** Post-apocalypse settings can also serve as fantasy milieus, if the disaster that ended civilization was magical or supernatural.

Many styles of horror can function in post-holocaust science fiction. Splatter, pulp, psychological, monsters-as-characters (whether mutants or more "traditional" monsters), and silly horror work as well in post-holocaust settings as in any other. The only styles that don't play well are conspiratorial horror (which customarily requires a functioning, even Byzantine, society) and cosmic horror (which loses much of its power if the world is *already* destroyed). However, even these aren't beyond the scope of post-apocalypse horror. If at least two sides in the secret war survived the holocaust – which they might, especially if they caused it – then it's back to business as usual. And a future in which the cosmic horrors have won and the heroes are the dregs of the resistance, battling transdimensional evil in its time of power, would make for an interesting campaign.

Space

Space-traveling horror is globetrotting horror (pp. 107-109) writ large. The GM's primary job is to build a convincing universe (***GURPS Space*** is indispensable here) and then populate it with thoroughly alien terrors. These monsters may conform to basic horror tropes on some level, but their manifestations should be (literally) unearthly if the players are to remain immersed in a truly futuristic and interstellar setting. If each extraterrestrial species is, for instance, nothing more than a different kind of vampire – draining blood, salt, water, mental force, or whatever – then the campaign will rapidly turn tiresome. Moreover, the details so vital in horror gaming are if anything *more* important in space-traveling horror, because the GM must not only build a world with every phrase, but also make the travelers' surroundings, capabilities, and options even clearer than normal.

Any style of horror can function in a space campaign, although the traditional approaches are pulp and psychological-splatter (a combination that works to perfection in *Alien*). Cosmic horror is a natural mix with space travel; the bigger the GM makes the (believable) universe, the more horrific becomes the discovery that it will be snuffed out by something even larger. If the GM has developed this future society enough for the players to appreciate or depend on it, then conspiratorial horror is also a viable far-future horror style.

Infinite Horrors

One way around the necessity for secret-magic or no-magic historical campaigns is to run a horror game set in an *alternate* history, where the monsters and magic are right out in the open. For example, Brian Stableford's *Empire of Fear* and Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* both place aristocracies of vampires in power in alternate-historical Europes. Such an alternate history might even be the source of the monsters plaguing *our* world, and the heroes must shut down the parachronic gateway linking this reality to the murderous android invaders from Centrum (p. B541) or the werewolf Gestapo that dominates Reich-5 (p. B543).

Other alternate-historical horrors from ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** might include:

Armada-2: Monster-hunting Inquisitors travel the world – or worlds – burning out evil wherever they find it. They might be uncomfortable allies for the PCs, or deadly enemies in a monsters-as-characters campaign!

Britannica-3: Ghostly lineages intermarry with the spirits of the PCs' homeworld, and slowly draw them into subtle undead politics.

Dixie-1: Voodoo bokors plot a justified – but horrifying – revenge on the victorious Confederacy.

Gernsback: The World Science Council fears no daikaiju! The benevolent Electronic Brain has assured that us no harm is possible . . .

Johnson's Rome: Tourists returning from a parallel Rome bring back a demonic taint picked up from succubi and lamiae . . . to a world with no natural resistance.

Nergal: Global cooling has broken some mystical barrier. The lilitu are migrating en masse to a warmer world – ours.

Shikaku-Mon: From vengeful ghosts in the Tapestry to cosmic horrors awakening in the informational shadows, Japan's world teeters on the brink of madness.

Chapter Four

Ominous Feelings, Gathering Shadows

*Beyond Algol, the **Marlow** fell through dead space at impossible velocities. Inside the metal cylinder was heat and life. Outside was dust and gas and endless cold.*

They were trying to talk Bau down, but he wasn't having it. Navigators were always a little weird – you had to be, just to hold the hyperspatial math in your head – but Bau had it worse than usual.

"It doesn't matter. Once we've seen it, we've named it. We've given it power over us now."

"That's nonsense," said Malz, who fancied himself a philosopher. "We named the cat Antonio. Did that give it power?"

"Did it not? Can you think of the cat now by another name? Can you think of it as anything but 'cat'?"

"But we've none of us named the Ghost," said Nik, who resented every second Bau spent babbling and not computing. She had a schedule to keep. "And besides, it isn't real. It's just an optical effect, like a rainbow."

"Are rainbows not real, then? God's promise to keep Man alive, that's an illusion? Perhaps it is. But it hardly matters; I've named It now. I've seen Its Name in the compile."

"What, it's math? Pythagoras will be glad to hear it." Malz tried to turn things into a joke, but Bau brushed off the attempt.

*"Pythagoras probably did hear It. Or see It. He believed in ghosts, after all, and he wore the pentagram for **some** reason. No, It isn't just here and now, It's everywhere and everywhen."*

"If it were everywhen," put in Apol, who studied history out of boredom, "wouldn't it have already been found? And named? By Pythagoras, or Newton, or Einstein?"

"There is no 'already' with It. Time is like a sheet of water to It. If you put your hand into water, what does it matter which finger goes in first? It is being named, here and now, and in Early Data-Age America, and in medieval Bulgaria, and in the Victorian West, and in worlds and times we can only imagine. Its Name is coming through our space-time like our fingers go through the surface of the water."

"All the more reason to get back in that nav-chamber," said Nik, a little too brightly. "The sooner we get to Omicron, the sooner you can warn someone. Tell them your discovery."

Bau smiled at them. "Oh, no. That's the one thing I can never do. If I spread Its Name, It expands. The water – our space-time – boils away from It, and everything never was."

Apol got there first. "You can't mean you . . ."

"Yes. I've opened the drives out. We're well off course, and there's no fuel left for corrections. Its Name dies with me. With all of us."

*Beyond Algol, a metal cylinder once called the **Marlow** fell through dead space, its velocity slowing, coming to match that of the dust and gas around it. After a few spot flares, it cooled to match its background perfectly.*

The point of horror roleplaying – as with all roleplaying – is for the GM and players alike to have fun. In horror, the fun comes from building an atmosphere of fear together. In some games, the fun comes when the players compete against the GM and each other: The GM throws in a trap, the players escape it; the GM throws in a monster, the players kill it; the GM throws in a magic sword, the players fight over it. Horror campaigns still have the traps and the monsters (and even the magic swords), but these are simply tools with which to build the game.

If the GM works at building a horrifying scenario and the players wisecrack through it, kill all the mummies, and loot the haunted castle, then nobody won. If the GM slaughters the adventurers with an endless army of vampires, leaving the players frustrated while he gloats at their incompetence, then nobody won. In horror roleplaying, whether the heroes kill the mummies or get swarmed by vampires, everybody wins *only* if the players are creeped out. This means that the players must cooperate with each other and with the GM, and that the GM has to take seriously his responsibility to tell a scary story and work at doing it right.

A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single ***effect*** *to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents – he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect . . . In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design.*

– Edgar Allan Poe, reviewing ***Twice-Told Tales***

Elements of Horror

What makes horror roleplaying different from other kinds? The vital distinction lies in the horror game's central intent: to produce an emotional response in the players of enjoyable, interesting fear. Roleplaying is all about telling stories, vicarious adventuring, and similar exercises of the mental muscles – and this remains true of horror gaming. The horror campaign has to speak to all of those needs at the same time as it evokes the atmosphere of fear.

This atmosphere is crucial. A story can deal with the supernatural, yet not be horror. A story can deal with violent death – even mysterious, violent death – yet not be horror. And a story can contain neither overt supernatural events nor violence, yet be horrifying. The keys to horror are *uncertainty, isolation,* and the *unnatural.*

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is vital to horror. The tension it produces must always be present to run a successful horror campaign. In other types of games, there's a clear course of correct action that's difficult to pursue: the ring *must* go into the volcano, the diamond studs *must* get to the Queen, etc. In a horror adventure, the difficulty is often that there's no clear course to follow – too much is unknown and too much is morally uncertain. The uncertainty may be about the nature of life and death (are ghosts souls, or are they psychic "snapshots"?), about whether a being is malevolent or benign (is little Clara possessed, or just cranky?), about the nature of good and evil (can we use our vampiric powers to stop our fellow vampires?), about whether the supernatural is involved in a given situation (why is Old Man Withers never around when the ghost is?), or about what's real and what's illusion or madness.

How many of us, if we really faced Dracula, would kill him instead of stopping to talk first? How many would have enough courage and a sufficiently strong stomach to actually drive in the stake? How many of us would shove a cross in the face of a wealthy businessman or participate in a full-fledged séance in a suburban home without feeling more than a little bit stupid? How many of us would quit our jobs and cut up our credit cards, even if we knew that Grey aliens controlled the banks?

Keep in mind the notion of the devil's choice. In conventional games, the choices are easy; e.g., kill the dragon or run away. In horror campaigns, they can be harder; if you run away, the vampire won't just stay there in his dungeon – he'll keep eating people. Investigators and monster-slayers will often be asked to make difficult decisions on the basis of insufficient information: Should we destroy the haunted house? What if the "haunting" is only a bunch of bored children or the lonely owner?

You can add additional layers of moral complexity with ease: What if killing the vampire means the death of a PC? Of an innocent? How far are the players willing to take their fictional alter egos in the struggle against evil? What if the sweet little girl can't be cured of her deadly disease, or demonic possession, or lycanthropy – does she have to die? What if the *whole village* must be destroyed in order to save it? Although you shouldn't push it if your players came to the gaming table seeking pulp escapism or moral clarity, good horror campaigns are often made of such dilemmas.

Isolation

Isolation, too, is fundamental to horror. Rarely does an "impossible" event occur in front of hundreds of witnesses. More often, there are only a few observers. Part of the fear of the supernatural comes from the knowledge that nobody will ever believe your story! As a result, traditional horror tales – and good horror adventures – isolate the protagonists. The heroes are unable to get help. Perhaps worse, they're unable to get an objective outside confirmation of what's happening to them; they must rely on their beliefs and experiences to deal with the impossible.

Physical isolation is a classic horror theme. At the height of the story, the protagonists may be locked up in the haunted house, sealed into the crypt, or snowed in alone. The dramatic action could take place in the wilderness or in an isolated rural area, or on a small boat, island, or spaceship. The heroes might even be trapped in an interdimensional or intertemporal "twilight zone."

The isolation can also be *social.* A strange experience may draw adventurers into the world of the supernatural when they look for answers and explanations. The more they learn, the greater their separation from everybody around them. By the time they have enough information to start making decisions, they discover that they're on their own. Who's going to understand, advise, or even believe them? Only other people equally caught up in supernatural doings. Those who deal with the supernatural must make their own choices and live with the results.

It's sometimes possible to combine social and physical isolation. A small party of Westerners dealing with native Voudun on a Caribbean island will be very alone indeed. A group of brave Haitian houngans tracing an ancient evil to a small town in 1930s Mississippi will be even more isolated! Or the heroes might be fleeing from authorities, or possibly led to doubt their own sanity or the safety of others in their presence.

Regardless of the situation, everybody is alone and afraid when the lights go out. Supernatural scenarios need not involve malevolent and dangerous forces – but *frightening* situations do occur, even if the fear turns out to be unjustified.

The Cell Phone Problem

Horror campaigns face a sleek, ubiquitous stumbling block at TL8 and above: cheap, reliable, high-tech communicators – notably mobile phones. Isolation suffers when the heroes can summon help or share clues by hitting "Redial." Fortunately, the creative GM has a variety of tactics available to reinforce the fundamentals of fear, even in the face of excellent coverage.

No Signal: The simplest – if most predictable and least "fair" – solution is to degrade or deny phone service. Cell phones don't work well (or at all) in sewers, haunted castles, or cannibal shacks in the middle of nowhere. They can get wet, smashed, or slimed, or just run out of juice. Horrific anomalies like weird weather, radioactivity, or gremlin effects (see *Things Fall Apart,* p. 112) might mess with signals or screw up the phone itself. Nobody investigating Things Man Was Not Meant To Know should expect mere human technology to work right in the first place.

Bad Signal: Alternatively, let the cell phone work but not necessarily solve the problem. The person the heroes are calling is dead, the cops think it's a crank call, or the villains can track cell phones with tech, bribery, or magic. Remember that calls can be traced and that those to emergency services are recorded. Calling someone may draw the monsters' attention to him as a new target, or bring innocents out at night in a mistaken – and fatal – attempt to help. Official help might become harassment: "You got us into this! You'd better get us out, or we'll destroy you." And if the villains steal, find, tap, or clone a hero's cell phone, they have a whole menu of delivery options – friends, family, the guy who makes silver bullets at 3 a.m. – at the touch of a button. A fiendish GM could require the PCs to roll vs. IQ to remember to pocket their cell after every call, and to check their pocket after every chase or combat . . . is it really worth going back into the graveyard because you *think* you left your phone there?

I Have to Take This: Cell phones are a distraction. Using one gives -4 to all Sense rolls, and even totally obvious things now require a roll to notice. Many cell phones require a free hand: drop the gun or the crucifix? Phones also light up (ruining the user's night vision and negating darkness penalties for enemies to spot him), and emit loud, musical tones (treat as "loud conversation" on the *Hearing Distance Table,* p. B358) at random intervals – that is, whenever the GM likes. Even a phone set on "vibrate" may spoil Concentrate or Aim maneuvers, if the carrier fails a Will roll.

It's Coming From Inside Your Pocket: Finally, the cell phone can become an avenue of extra terror. An NPC vanishes; the PCs get a call from his cell phone, and pick up to hear his agonized shrieks. Soon, every ring becomes a potential Fright Check. Taking a picture of a ghost with a cell-phone camera might result in a haunted phone – or (as in *Kairo*) cell phones may simply be extra-susceptible to spectral energies of an electrical or informational nature. Imagine a phone that makes its own calls, changes random speed-dial numbers, adds or drops words in conversations, or overhears or broadcasts anything said in its presence. If it's synched to the heroes' computer, now it's in their records. The Conspiracy can do almost all of this with clever hacks; black magicians likewise, with summoned imps. Why should the *PCs* be the only ones on their cell phone plans?

The Unnatural

An element common to all horror is the uncanny, or the unnatural. Even the most mundane serial-killer story draws its power from the killer's unnatural madness. The unnatural is that which contrasts with the game world's "normality." In a fantasy setting with talking animals, such as Narnia, the presence of a talking dog isn't uncanny and doesn't promote horror. In a relentlessly modern scenario, a talking dog might well create an atmosphere of horror, especially if its power of speech is unexplained – or if it keeps telling you to kill your neighbors, because they're really demons in disguise . . .

The uncanny and the unnatural therefore depend upon the game world for their character. They rely upon the players' belief in, and sense of, that world for their power. Too much unreality and the background will seem nonsensical – nothing will have the power to surprise or unnerve. But if it isn't uncanny enough, the result will be a straightforward adventure story rather than a horror story.

Elements of the unnatural should be present (at least potentially) at every stage of the horror scenario. The sense of "things just don't seem right" is a powerful trigger for nervousness, which is one step from fear. The setting should be too old, or too dark, or too *something.* The NPCs should seem odd, or dangerous, or both – at least at first. The timing should foreshorten, or collapse, or stretch oddly. The GM should make everything just slightly off-kilter in a horror game until he gets a better instinct for his world and for his players' reactions to it. Sometimes, in modern horror especially, these instincts and reactions develop rapidly. In fantasy or science-fiction horror, they might take some time to grow, as the players must first figure out what's *normal.*

Surrealism

Surrealism is a close cousin to the supernatural. Neither is necessary for horror, but both are seemingly vitally intertwined with the genre. Either can make a horror game impossible to accept if overdone.

> *Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.*
>
> *– J.B.S. Haldane,* ***Possible Worlds and Other Essays***

Where the supernatural is the violation of the game world's "natural laws" (or "moral laws"), the surreal questions those laws' existence and ignores their reality. Surrealism can be a jarring – even fundamental – shifting of the nature of the narrative, the world, the characters, or anything else that might seem to be a point of reference. Its value is its ability to place the heroes in a "place without laws," where anything can happen. In horror, "anything" is usually *bad.* The level of surrealism – but not necessarily its type or nature – can and should be tailored to remain fairly consistent throughout the campaign, although the climax can pull out whatever stops the GM likes.

The GM can mitigate the alienating effects of increasing surrealism by enhancing the depth and consistency of the "non-horror" portion of the game world. Of course, this takes work. At its best, though, it can provide a particularly horrifying contrast, as the shards of the world come apart in an especially well-detailed locale.

As well, the GM can contain surrealism within the confines of madness (where it rules supreme) or dream (where it might not; see *Dreamworlds,* p. 114), or within certain places in the game world where the fabric of space and time is worn thinnest. These locations needn't even manifest the traditionally supernatural to become scary places indeed – especially if everything seemed so *normal* on Elm Street just a few minutes ago.

Style and Theme

While keeping the elements of horror in mind, the GM will likely want to play the actual game in a familiar style, and bring certain themes to the foreground in the story and setting details. The choice of horror genre or subgenre (see *Horrifying Genres,* pp. 113-119) will often indicate a bias in these areas, but roleplaying games – even horror ones – should be opportunities for creative freedom, not straitjackets or prisons. You may find your campaign naturally gravitating toward a single style, or emphasizing a certain theme; if so, then go with the flow and follow the lead of the story you're all writing together.

Styles

Regardless of genre or subgenre, the campaign can be played in one or more of the traditional horror *styles.* It's usually wise to stay mostly within a single style, since – like horror in general – every style depends on repetition, conventions, and shared themes to build mood and develop dramatic unity and conviction. That said, briefly changing styles within a campaign can allow the players (and GM) to exercise unused creative muscles. Players often appreciate a short scenario that lets them see their characters in a different light. If player interest is flagging, then a more permanent shift in style might be in order; a campaign with that kind of fresh blood in its veins can gain a whole new lease on unholy life.

What follows are discussions of some of the most important horror styles, along with their characteristic themes and conventions. The GM shouldn't feel imprisoned by these conventions, but he should be aware of them and not violate them groundlessly. It can be difficult to evoke the proper style without at least *some* nod to the themes that have made it worth evoking in the first place.

Splatter

Splatter is horror that elevates gore above all, that glories in the physicality of severed limbs, bright arterial blood, and flyblown corpses. Its purpose in a horror campaign is to force open the players' eyes – to make them *see* and *feel* the results of horror. Splatter is often combined with a subversive political message implying that the "normal" world is built on a foundation of horrors, and that nothing is truly safe or innocent. Interestingly, this is where splatter and cosmic horror can meet: in their common insistence that normality is just refusal or inability to see the inevitable horror around us. In less politically charged contexts, splatter's goal is simply to bring our suppressed fears into the light, either for their shock value or as a refining ordeal.

Consistently running a game in the splatter style requires at least as much discipline as in any other style; otherwise, the recitation of wounds, atrocities, and general unpleasantness becomes hackneyed and loses its power. The GM should vary the types of horrors described while keeping each horrific image vividly alive in the players' minds. Keeping the *heroes* alive is of secondary concern.

You can profitably use splatter as a source of information about the campaign. This can be done directly, by conveying important plot developments and clues in the gruesome descriptions (giving the players an incentive to pay attention rather than blot out the imagery's unpleasantness), or indirectly, as a signal that "things are getting worse" (or "things are not as they seem"). Indirect use of splatter as information becomes splatter as metaphor, which mixes well with other styles, particularly cosmic and psychological horror.

It's certainly possible to build an entire horror campaign around splatter, where the escalation of grue is the primary theme, although the GM should confirm that his players *want* to engage in a welter of blood over the long haul. If so, then splatter can serve as the horrific element in a near-conventional "hack-and-slash" game, or as the dominant image in a subtle exploration of social and personal disintegration. Splatter is capable of supporting either of these goals, or anything in between.

Pulp Horror

Running horror in the pulp style means running it more intensely, more earnestly, and – most of all – more *thrillingly.* If horror roleplaying is about conveying the emotion of fear, then pulp is about delivering thrills. The pulps had their ancestors in the "penny dreadfuls" of Victorian London, and their successors in the paperback originals and cheap horror movies of today's shopping-mall complexes, but their heyday was the era between the World Wars. For this reason, pulp-style campaigns are often historical ones set in the "pulp era" (see *GURPS Cliffhangers,* p. 116). However, any game can be played in the pulp style, regardless of setting; what distinguishes pulp is its attitude of fast-paced or high-colored excitement, not the specific accoutrements of the Jazz Age. Hence, pulp gaming has much in common with "cinematic" gaming, in that both concentrate on emotion and effect rather than on realism and detailed storylines.

The greatest danger in pulp horror is that the game will cease to be horror and become simply adventure. There's nothing wrong with adventure roleplaying – but if the GM or the players are expecting horror and not getting it, then disappointment may set in before everyone can adjust to pure adventure gaming. The key to keeping pulp horrifying is to intensify the menacing themes and the dark colors of the villains. Let the players sense exactly what "unutterable evil" means when the Cold Ones feed in a kindergarten. Pulp responds well to both thrills *and* gore, and the GM can add to the sensation of speed and change by alternating between the two.

Cosmic Horror

Cosmic horror derives its power from its immensity: The horrors are bigger than the world, older than the world, and, in some sense, create and underlie the world. They can't be escaped, evaded, or defeated; the only thing that keeps the tiny pockets of innocence that feeble humans call "normality" in existence is that the horrors have no reason to act directly against them. The horrors *will* win in millennia – to them, millennia are as seconds to us. In cosmic horror, all knowledge is dangerous (much as all knowledge is doubtful in psychological horror).

Thrills vs. Gore

When running a cinematic horror campaign, it's all too easy to rely on gory situations to create Fright Checks. But remember that not all horror films use special effects to excite their audiences. Instead of grossing us out with steaming entrails and rotting corpses, they *thrill* us with their rollercoaster pacing and nerve-wracking suspense. Producing a good thriller without much (or *any*) gore is a mark of a skilled director. Similarly, running a hair-raising adventure without blood and guts is a sign of a talented GM.

To make a thriller work, the GM *must* keep the players from figuring out exactly what they're up against until the very end. Reveal things a little at a time. Don't show the monster right off – let the party arrive just after it leaves, or have it attack them in near-darkness. They shouldn't really see it until (or after!) the final confrontation.

Most of the adventure should take place at night. Emphasize darkness in the scene descriptions. When the players make Vision rolls for the heroes to see things – which they should have to do often – impose heavy penalties for darkness. When a Fright Check is called for, apply the darkness penalty to *that,* too; poor visibility can be disorienting and disconcerting.

Include lots of unexplainable occurrences. The monster's victims don't turn up in bloody chunks – they just disappear. The house keys a PC leaves in his jacket pocket are lost, only to turn up later in his mailbox. The monster ducks into an alley that the heroes *know* is a dead end, but by the time they get there, the thing is gone.

Gothic Horror

The Gothic novel is the horror genre's immediate ancestor, spawning many of its most common themes and tropes. Between Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), an entirely new kind of story was invented, formalized, and endlessly repeated with one or another element emphasized for a small note of variety. The Gothic "shilling shocker" was the slasher film of its day; audiences thrilled to its almost ritual predictability, even as critics ignored or trivialized it. The Gothic shudder-tale reemerged in other socially stressful times, from Victorian England (Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* in 1897), to post-Vietnam America (Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire,* in 1976), to post-9/11 America (Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight,* in 2005).

The Gothic makes human concerns, especially emotions, central. How people react to nature's fury, the oppression of convention, or death's icy hand tells the story. Passion drives experience; the great tragedy of becoming a vampire isn't becoming undead but never again seeing the sunrise with your true love.

In classic Gothic horror, the landscape is tempestuous, foreign, or both; a sense of wildness obtrudes on the action. The main setting is the haunted castle – or more generally, an antiquated or anachronistic building with elements of the supernatural at least conjecturally present (e.g., a ruined abbey or a rambling, centuries-old mansion). Those elements themselves are often antiquated or at least exotic (paintings, statues, suits of armor, crypts, and grottoes).

The Gothic villain is a dark, powerful, fascinating man with a mysterious or supernatural past – the source of our modern vampire. The hero and heroine are young, innocent lovers, usually blond or "fair." The evils stem from some ancient family tragedy, typically one linking the villain and the heroine. Often, the heroine finds herself fascinated by the villain. Eventually, the evils are vanquished and love is rewarded.

The specter, the dream, the mysterious stranger, and the fascination with religious ritual all inhabit the earliest Gothic tales. By the turn of the 19th century, elements of the German "terror-tale" amplified them: the magical cure, the femme fatale, the ghostly bride or groom, insanity, and physical metamorphosis. All these tropes still appear in modern horror stories.

A pure Gothic horror campaign in any milieu would be an interesting combination of historical anachronism, recurring surrealism, prosaic scale (although handled in an epic manner), and dreamlike imagery. The PCs would be relatively powerless except when their natural passions (love, purity, faith, etc.) are invoked.

For more on Gothic horror roleplaying in its 19th-century heyday, see ***GURPS Screampunk.***

Everything that seems to explain the world simply reveals more of its innate horror and madness, which makes this style of horror oddly suited to florid surrealistic excesses, as well as to slow, academic exploration of the Awful Truth.

Once the players stop thinking about "winning" and start thinking about sharing the feeling of fear, cosmic horror becomes one of the richest and most rewarding styles for roleplaying adventure. Even a short-ranged, minor victory becomes a triumph; one person saved from the madness and corruption of the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know is a success made infinite by its very triviality. This style can function in any genre, although it does tend to require a more "intellectual" culture than many fantasy worlds possess. Cosmic horror works well in the present day because – as with conspiracy gaming (p. 117), with which it shares many thematic similarities – it's more fun if the players recognize the world being horrifically revealed to their characters' eyes.

Lovecraft's approach remains the classic model, but many other possibilities exist. The keys are to keep human goals, powers, and beliefs nearly irrelevant in the campaign world's actual scope, and to widen the visible scope gradually to reveal this fact; see *Scope* (p. 106). Even high fantasy can become cosmic horror if the GM plays the potential of nonhuman, immortal races to its fullest: The elves' reticence is no longer shyness, but pure and dispassionate disinterest. Any style of horror carried to the utmost extremes of nihilism can become cosmic horror, if the GM and players allow it.

Psychological Horror

Psychological horror explores the effects of horrors on its characters' psychologies and personalities. From the classic British ghost story, to the serial-killer trash novel, to the postmodern J-horror (p. 126) tale of urban alienation, psychological horror remains a major vein of the genre.

Campaigns in this style are even less "victory-oriented" than cosmic horror ones, as the central theme is the disintegration of the heroes' beliefs under unimaginable stress. Games in which the PCs begin as monsters are common, if metaphorical, treatments of psychological horror themes. Surrealism, hallucinations, delusions, and dreams can also add metaphorical weight, or become further symptoms of the characters' collapse. However, where games of madness center on the disintegration of intellect, psychological horror is fundamentally about the destruction of the protagonist's central being, his soul.

Given psychological horror's ultimate dependence upon the decay of the heroes' ability, will, and personality, it's usually unwise to attempt this style with inexperienced roleplayers. Even veteran gamers might not want to explore their characters' failure directly. However, for the player looking for a change from stories of triumph, victory, and personal empowerment, the narrative of psychological disintegration can be a welcome and powerful option.

Psychological horror campaigns can be more or less symbolic and metaphorical in substance and style, and elements of this approach can be used in "standard" horror games.

Even in psychological horror, there can – and should – remain the possibility of redemption and rebirth. A game where the heroes are doomed to fail can be as tedious and predictable as one where they're destined to succeed.

There are similarities between psychological horror and noir genre, where alienated individuals become damaged by the corruption around them. In more conventional horror, of course, isolated people become damaged by the literal evil around them. The connection can swing between these two narratives, or hew more closely to one over the other. The trick in psychological horror is for the GM and players to recognize when some horror truly damages a PC's psyche and when it merely creates a physical scar. In this style, survivor guilt, the corruption of power, callousness toward life, skeptical hatred, and other emotional injuries should play as large a role as gunshot wounds, claw marks, and half-healed fang punctures.

Silly Horror

Humor naturally follows horror, largely because laughter is a defense mechanism. A frightened person is very relieved when he finds that he can laugh! In a cinematic campaign filled with stock horror elements, humorous horror can be the best kind. Run a game where everybody – monsters and heroes alike – knows that horror clichés have the force of natural law. Or take your cues from Abbott and Costello, or Bugs Bunny, and run a game where the monsters can't really hurt anybody (they still inspire Fright Checks – all the better to get people running around and falling over things). Funny monsters are so slow that any cretin can outrun them, or so stupid that a tap on the far shoulder can trick them into looking the wrong way.

However, the players can't exploit the monsters' legal-mindedness or incompetence to blow them away, or the adventure becomes a bloodbath instead of a comedy. If the heroes are armed in this sort of campaign – and they don't have to be – then make sure that they're terrible marksmen. Better yet, contrive things so that their guns are useless; give them dud ammo or blanks, or let the monsters steal their weapons to use as doorstops. Monsters shouldn't be deadly, and neither should the hunters. The two should be in a continually shifting balance where even death is but an inconvenience and where the most powerful firearm can be stopped up with a convenient carrot.

Another requirement is players with a sense of humor. Let's face it: For some people, roleplaying is a serious challenge, a life-or-death struggle. Don't try to give these players a silly campaign; no one will enjoy it.

Finally, in humorous horror – as in any cinematic campaign – be prepared to drop any rule that slows down the game. When playing for laughs, keep it light, fast, and *funny.*

J-Horror

Horror literature in Japan predates even Poe, beginning with Akinari Ueda's *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (1776), which itself drew on Chinese folklore and on Japanese traditional *kaidan,* or ghost stories. Beginning in the mid-17th century, samurai and other elites played a game called *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai* ("A Gathering of 100 Kaidan") in a room with 100 candles. As each story was told, a candle was extinguished, and the final candle story summoned a ghost. These kaidan became *kabuki* plays and lurid prints called *ukiyo-e,* both of which provided a distinctive visual style for the stories.

During the postwar renaissance of Japanese cinema, major films likewise drew on the work of Ueda and his successors, from *Ugetsu* (Kenji Mizoguchi, 1953), to *Onibaba* (Kaneto Shindō, 1964), to *Kwaidan* (Masaki Kobayashi, 1964). But cheap, exploitative works like *Scary True Stories* (Norio Tsuruta, 1991) and especially *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998) successfully married the lurid imagery of the ukiyo-e (and its successor art form, the manga comic) to the uncanny frisson of the kaidan tradition, becoming what American audiences considered the core of distinctively Japanese horror film, or "J-horror."

As a subgenre, J-horror films have a common style: incongruent sound, odd angles and stop-motion effects, washed-out or intensely dark lighting, and weirdly elongated fields of view. None of this is particularly easy in a roleplaying game, but some J-horror tropes are more adaptable:

Vengeful ghosts. The typical J-horror monster is a young girl's ghost, dressed in white, with long black hair obscuring her face. (White clothing and unkempt hair recall traditional Japanese burial practices.) This *onryō* – a shade, as described under *Ghost* (see p. 79) – is often a social outcast, far more powerful in death than in life, and motivated by a single-minded, almost purposeless fury.

No innocents. In *Ringu,* anyone who watches the tape is cursed; in *Ju-On,* anyone who enters the house is doomed. Unlike Western horror, it isn't "the good girl" who lives and "the bad girl" who dies.

Decay and taint. J-horror settings may be seeming idylls that rapidly disintegrate (*Uzumaki, Kairo*), or begin as urban wastes (*Dark Water*). In many cases (*Kansen, Kairo, Ringu, Uzumaki*) the horror spreads by contagion, like a disease or a tainted meme.

Cursed technology. Artifacts and technology, from the videotape in *Ringu* to the Internet in *Kairo,* are conduits for the uncanny.

Arbitrary rules. In *Kairo,* red tape stops ghosts; in *Ringu,* copying the tape protects you. These technological superstitions feel like genuine folklore in their not-quite-random logic.

Uncanny or malevolent children. Sometimes (*Ju-On, Ringu*) they're the ghosts; other times (*Uzumaki*), they're almost passive or eager victims. Occasionally (*Dark Water, Marebito*), they're both.

Survival Horror

The polar opposite of *High-Powered Horror* (pp. 104-105), "survival horror" channels powerlessness as a wellspring of terror. This style privileges resource management, tactics, and stealth while foreshadowing a fundamentally bleak endgame: sooner or later, the horrors will swallow up the heroes. Exceptions exist, such as the theatrical version of *28 Days Later,* but are almost always driven by nervous producers rather than by narrative logic. While its literary origins go back to Lovecraftian tales like "Herbert West – Reanimator" and "The Lurking Fear," survival horror only blossomed with George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and the subsequent zombie boom. In video games, it arguably began with *Alone in the Dark* (1992), although *Resident Evil* (1996) was the first game to market itself as "survival horror." The label is now applied to *any* game or movie that features zombies or similar shambling hordes.

Other common (though not universal) traits of survival horror include:

Brutes vs. brains. The nearly always mindless horrors appear in swarms or hordes of identical monsters. Surviving heroes are smart, not just tough.

Disunity. Particularly in films, there's tension, arguments, or even outright betrayal within the human survivor community or protagonist group. Rather than join against the common threat, the pressures turn people bitter, selfish, panicky, and cruel. If the GM wants to emulate such intraparty conflicts, then it's probably best to make survival-horror games one-offs unless everyone involved truly likes that kind of roleplaying.

Dwindling resources. Guns run out of bullets or get lost. Armor is torn off. Food grows scarce. The heroes slowly lose their technological and cultural crutches, bringing them down to the level of the monsters outside – often despite having whole cities' worth of abandoned gear nearby. Some gamers find this *incredibly* frustrating, so the GM should clear it going in.

Invaded Houses (p. 130). Nowhere is safe for long; the heroes must keep moving or die. If there's a window, something *will* crash through it.

Labyrinths. Especially in video games, the heroes must navigate maze-like paths to avoid the hordes. This trope also shows up in films like *The Descent* and *This Is Not a Love Song,* featuring protagonists lost in unfamiliar terrain, and *Cloverfield,* where a familiar city becomes an obstacle course.

Promised Land. The heroes are seeking a safe haven: the evacuation zone in *Cloverfield,* "the island" in *Dawn of the Dead,* etc. The GM decides whether it's a lie, a mirage, full of zombies, or a genuine refuge. Survival-horror purists regard having a real "Promised Land" as cheating!

Themes

Presenting a theme isn't a matter of distributing handouts that state, "This campaign is about corruption." Nor is it a matter of an NPC nodding sagely and offering a few thoughts on the topic of doom. Themes are *hidden* notes, best kept under the story itself. Think of a game's theme as its skeleton, its bones: they give it structure and let it stand up – and as with your own skeleton, it's seldom a good sign if the bones show up too clearly. You don't have to decide on a theme at the beginning; if you're telling a good story, then your theme will emerge in due time. Themes show up in little bits of offhand character development or evocative symbolism; eventually, these tiny pebbles add up into an avalanche that sweeps your story to its climax.

Betrayal

The theme of betrayal plays a key role in horror. "Trust no one" is the code, but that's easier said than done. Players and characters alike tend to lower their guard around the obviously harmless or actively useful NPCs. The GM should occasionally remind them that this is a mistake. Especially in conspiratorial horror – but to an extent in any game – any NPC can be a villain. The friendly clown could be a madman, the nice old lady at the sweetshop might be a cannibal, and the heroes' mentor may be using them for his own fiendish purposes. Little marks of betrayal can show up in a symbolic fashion (30 pieces of silver, to melt down for bullets) or as the tragic flaw in a truly beloved and otherwise noble NPC.

Be warned that betrayal is easy to overuse. In all but the most conspiratorial games, it can actively prevent the players from investing any emotional energy in the game world if it becomes too common. However, it works at the heart of isolation in the horrific world: We're all separate from each other, alone against the dark.

Corruption

Closely related to betrayal, corruption is the slow change of something good into something evil. Decaying flesh, rotting meat, disintegrating cities, eroding morality . . . all of these things tell the story of horror loose in the world. In dark, gritty campaigns, the corruption is omnipresent; the party may have to choose to defend a corrupt world against an even worse alternative. In brighter, more heroic games, the corruption comes from outside: invaders from Mars, skeleton ships from the Dry Tortugas, or vampires from far-off Transylvania. Corruption might have a face, making it a mirror and/or a target for the heroes. Images of corruption include not only rot, mold, and decay, but also such horror elements as the ruined castle and the abandoned factory.

The GM should know that expanding the corruption's visible scope while limiting the game's scale increases the players' sense of confinement. Make sure they fight back and don't withdraw! See *Power Corrupts* (pp. 146-148) for some rules that model such growing corruption.

Doom

Corruption is a process, but doom is a destiny. Doom can hang over individuals (see *Character Hooks,* pp. 6-8), the whole party, or the entire campaign world. It appears in ravens croaking prophecy, in lowering storm clouds, and in ruins of once-mighty planets.

Doom is a powerful theme in cosmic horror. To rise above it, the players must believe that even a small victory means something – that it's better to light the proverbial candle than to curse the darkness. Ironically, this can help the heroes (and their players) adjust themselves to a corrupt setting; if everything is doomed by Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, then it's hard to get worked up over a county sheriff on the take. The GM has to decide how to balance this "anesthetic" effect of doom on a corruption-themed game. One possibility is to back off from the purely nihilistic cosmic horror style and intimate that the corruption caused – and hastens – the doom. Another good way to combine these themes in cosmic horror is to present the corruption as a *symptom* of the doom: society crumbles because it's doomed, not the other way around.

Corruption and doom also work together to permeate the settings – and to color the villains – in traditional Gothic horror (p. 125).

Struggle

On an up note (at least for horror), struggle can be the theme of the game. It might be as simple as "good must fight evil or see evil prosper," which is ideal for pulp campaigns but adaptable for any style. In cosmic horror, struggle is more uncertain; effective heroes must use Knowledge Man Was Not Meant To Use to thwart Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. In psychological horror and traditional Gothic tales alike, the struggle can be completely internal, the fight against madness, beast instinct, or ancestral taint. This internal struggle can be mirrored in the outer world; e.g., a PC vampire may have a nemesis (perhaps one of his own get!) who embodies those dark impulses. The symbolism of struggle is that of warfare, swords, and clashes by night – thunder and lightning in the natural world, gangs and street-races in the modern one.

Symbolic Settings

Most horror scenarios – and many horror games – take place in one of two symbolic settings: the *Bad Place* or the *Invaded House.*

The Bad Place

The Bad Place – one of the oldest tropes of the horror genre – is a natural setting for horror scenarios. Want ghosts? Go to the haunted house. Vampires? Go to Transylvania, or Carfax Abbey, or that rundown mansion on the edge of town. Setting the action in the Bad Place is good for beginning GMs or GMs writing essentially standalone scenarios, as well as for an episode in an ongoing horror campaign. The Bad Place typically has some of the following characteristics, which can help the horror scenarist make the horror work.

The Bad Place Is Complex or Confusing

The Bad Place might be a labyrinth, or a non-Euclidean necropolis, or a mansion full of secret passages and false walls. Keep its specific dimensions unknown. Ideally, it should be dark.

Romantic Horror

Ever since 130 A.D., when Phlegon told the story of the "Bride of Corinth" to Emperor Hadrian, romance and horror have been intertwined. (*Spoiler:* The bride was dead.) Most stories in that vein concerned lustful or predatory horror: the lamia (p. 66), the succubus (p. 66), and brooding Gothic villains (p. 125). Emily Brontë's Gothic *Wuthering Heights* (1847) first presented an actual (albeit twisted) love story between the heroine and the monster, echoed in Sheridan Le Fanu's lesbian vampire tale "Carmilla" (1872), and in our own age with *Near Dark* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* with the *Anita Blake* and *Twilight* novel series, and with shelves full of "paranormal romance" paperbacks.

Originally, the monster is simply the rake, rapist, or seducer – Byronically attractive, perhaps, but up to no good. Assuming basically mature players and GM, adding this element isn't much different from inserting any other villainous motive (pp. 136-138). Likewise, a story featuring monsters in love with each other adds poignancy or camp, but no great complexity. Playing out a romance between monsters and major NPCs or PCs takes some planning, however. Though GMs tread lightly on personal "spotlight time," love gone wrong remains a great plot for a story or a whole campaign. If love blossoms, it can echo the game's basic theme:

Betrayal: The lover lies to the PC – she pretends that she isn't a vampire, or that she's a "good vampire." The PC must betray his lover to defeat her evil werewolf clan. The PC's wife cheats on him with a ghost, or he cheats on her with one.

Corruption: Forbidden love breeds worse monsters. The PC is addicted to vampiric bites or the attentions of succubi. The PC (or a major NPC) sells out the other PCs, or the city, or the rest of humanity for love. The PC must serve evil in order to win monstrous love – or finds the evil itself seductive.

Doom: Loving a monster will bring doom upon others – Lancelot as ogre. Loving a vampire will kill the PC – or loving a human will kill (or turn evil) the vampiric PC. Unnatural love between PC and NPC is pure, but cannot withstand the coming horror. A PC is fated to love a demon and die.

Struggle: Our love can conquer all obstacles! A vampire-loving PC must fight another vampire for love. Loving a faerie involves the PC in an ongoing Unseelie vendetta. Only the human half of the werewolf loves the PC; the wolf half loves another werewolf.

Modes

A *mode* is an approach to a genre – what your goals are and what flavors you'll add. Selecting a mode can help define the campaign within the chosen genre. Modes resemble adjectives: You can choose more than one, but it's wise to avoid too many at once.

Dealing as it does with a single, potentially tricky genre, ***Horror*** breaks out some common horror modes for further analysis in questions of scale (p. 105), scope (p. 106), austerity (p. 106), etc. Modes can also include styles (pp. 123-127), themes (pp. 127-130), characteristic fears (see Chapter 2), or unique approaches driven by the campaign milieu, by the GM's favorite fiction, or by the questions the campaign seeks to explore.

Modes not covered elsewhere include:

Camp: Every cliché is exaggerated, every decision is a soliloquy; the world abounds with Important Capital Letters. There's always fog on the moor, and the wolves howl at dramatic moments. Whether played for post-modern irony or pure sense of wonder, camp is about forgetting yourself in glowing black and white – or, as in the case of Lord Dunsany, in luxuriant, fin-de-siècle purple. B-movie horror, fairytale horror, and even some pulps take on elements of camp.

Fortean: The world isn't just stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we *can* imagine. There's no single truth; rather, there are many competing truths, each dumping rains of carp on us and randomly painting things blue. Coincidence is causation and everything is weird if looked at right. Play Forteanism for silly horror, as increasing madness and surrealism, or as omens heralding the uncanny.

Investigative: The focus is on solving puzzles and discovering the unknown. The game's fun lies in encountering uncanny new monsters and fitting them into the world's unholy pattern. Investigative campaigns tend to slowly but steadily increase their visible scope (p. 106). Cosmic horror games, after Lovecraft's model, work well as investigative ones.

Technothriller: Technothriller borrows the narrative thrust and suspense of the pulps, but one needn't rush to action without lovingly inventorying the weaponry and detailed plans for using it. Finding black NSA brainware, building a steampunk ghost-solidifier, setting up a textbook ambush on a vampire lord – that's the fun of technothriller gaming. Medical suspense (see *The Plague Is the Horror,* p. 86) makes an interesting mix with technothriller. Much of the frisson of modern-day cosmic horror is the use (and uselessness) of ever-more-powerful devices – which only reveals the horrors, and their power, more clearly!

For instance, setting a horror scenario on a football field is possible, but once the monster (a spectral quarterback? A zombie cheerleader?) appears, the flat and open geography turns the situation into a simple chase or a tactical combat – thrilling, perhaps, but not very scary. Move the horror into the locker room, where the heroes slip on the tile and catch glimpses of moving forms that prove to be their reflections in the mirror. Move it into the jam-packed parking lot, where something could be under (or inside) each car. Move it into the deserted school building, where lockers line the seemingly endless corridors and every classroom might hold horror. Move it under the bleachers, where all those posts and columns and hanging steel frameworks seem to exist solely to brush up against the heroes, and where claustrophobia has full rein. Even a zombie cheerleader would be scary under the bleachers, with the game in full swing, and with the rustling of candy wrappers and the heavy thumping of feet overhead.

The Bad Place Is Hard to Escape

Perhaps the Bad Place is a prison, an asylum, or the symbol of an omnipresent power (e.g., a ruined church or castle). Or it might announce itself by action: the door of the haunted house slamming shut, the only boat on the island drifting away from its cut rope, the blizzard closing in, the sound of the airlock closing . . . any of these could be the "starting gun" of horror. The heroes are now confined with the horror. They can be constrained in time, too; if the horror isn't stopped at the Bad Place tonight, the vampires will spawn, Lady Valentine will go mad forever, or the Things Man Was Not Meant To Know will burst through the gates of Euclidean space-time. It's harder to create the atmosphere of suspense if the PCs are free to turn around and leave at any time. While their moral fiber will, ideally, keep them in the Bad Place, the GM shouldn't *count* on that.

The Bad Place Is Anachronistic

The Bad Place is frequently a relic from the past encroaching on the present. It's an unnatural survival, a relict, a Thing That Should Not Be. In this, it's similar to the ghosts that often haunt it – they, too, are things of the past intruding where they should not be.

The original Gothic novels were set in ruined castles, abbeys, and other crumbling structures that by their very existence mocked the notion of orderly progress and the laws of history. The Bad Place is rarely anachronistic in the other sense – a futuristic thing intruding on a timeless past – but that isn't impossible: a cybernetic abattoir dropping into our time from the dystopian future would be a Bad Place, too. In the Infinite Worlds background, a Bad Place might be a reality shard (p. B534)! Unless a fantasy world has an extraordinarily well-realized history (for the *players,* not just the GM or PCs), this is a difficult sense to convey in a fantasy horror campaign. Intrusive anachronism is much easier in historical or modern horror; in science-fiction horror, it might be so easy to find that it loses its effect. This sense of anachronism, of being unmoored in time and place, commonly feeds into the Bad Place's final characteristic.

The Bad Place Is Unnatural and Malevolent in Itself

The Bad Place has an atmosphere of desolation. Not only is the mansion haunted, but the leaves of the trees on the lawn rustle by themselves without wind. Doors jam shut or open at inconvenient (or deadly) times; books that never existed sit fatly on the shelves; furniture seems to move by itself when nobody is watching; the eyes on the painting follow you around the room. The poltergeist is an excellent illustration of the melding of the unnatural hatefulness of the setting with the lore of the ghost. Even nature itself is unnatural – freak lightning storms, a choking pea-soup fog, and "the worst blizzard in 20 years" can all evoke this effect.

The Invaded House

The inverse of the Bad Place is the Invaded House: a place of safety, security, and normality intruded upon by some disruptive, intrusive, uncanny entity. Where the story of the Bad Place is that of the forces of natural order, or good, invading a domain of the unnatural, or evil, the story of the Invaded House is that of the Threat From Outside. The Invaded House depends for its power on the comfort level of the place invaded; the hero will feel less shock at being attacked in a motel room just off the Interstate than he will in his parents' lovely split-level in the suburbs. The horror becomes more awful by contrast to the familiarity and comfort that it violates. The invasion can be creeping and subtle (like a hidden incursion of body-snatching pod creatures), or sudden, relentless, and brutal (as with a psycho killer's murderous assault on a sorority house on Halloween).

Psychologically, the Invaded House is a metaphor for the body. The violation of personal space within home walls is analogous to allowing a foreign object inside the skin. The William Hope Hodgson novel *The House on the Borderland* makes this obvious, with the basement (where vile, pallid, pig-like beasts may lurk) representing the hero's unconscious; his fanatic attempts to safeguard his upstairs study reflect his steadily disintegrating sanity. Although this can be a difficult concept to communicate clearly in a game setting, the players will be aware of it – if only subconsciously. If the GM plays on it deftly enough, then the players may never know why they flinched when the creature burst through the windows and the lights suddenly went out.

Unfortunately, the Invaded House is a one-trick pony. If used too often, the violated sense of comfort and security is never present in the first place. The players and their characters come to regard safety as an illusion, because *no* place is safe from the evil. This is often a desirable (and useful) state of mind for the GM to encourage, but it does mean that he must work out some new Bad Places for a while, or avoid climactic scenarios and settle for tension-reducing investigative sessions.

Combinations

Too much evil can transform the Invaded House into a new Bad Place: the windows are broken, the furniture is upended, there are bullet holes in the walls, and something horrible has died in the bedroom after swearing revenge. Suddenly, the place of comfort is damaged, warped, and unnatural. The heroes might be reluctant to leave their home, even after it has been the center of innumerable blasphemous manifestations, all stemming from the first Invasion. The GM shouldn't necessarily rely on this, since the sense of closure derived from driving the horror out of the sunlight is part of the reward of horror roleplaying. If the Invaded House is to become a full-fledged Bad Place, then allow the party a chance to realize this, leave, and come back loaded for bear in a grand climax.

The GM can combine the two symbolic settings in one scenario – evil attacks, good counterattacks – or in a longer story arc. Perhaps our heroic Green Berets have plunged deep into the Mekong Delta to discover the Temple of the Bat God. They fight off his minions in the Bad Place and leave the jungle. However, the Bat God's cultists follow the soldiers back to Los Angeles and establish a cult shrine there (a symbolic Invaded House, as foreign evil sets up camp in the protagonists' homeland). The L.A. cult attacks the commandos in their civilian life (an Invaded House scenario), after which the heroes strike back at the shrine (by now, a Bad Place) and then mount "one more mission" back into the Delta (a *really, really* Bad Place) to destroy the Bat God forever.

Running Horror

The key to the successful horror roleplaying session is to make it scary, to build an atmosphere of fear. The players should be nervous, jumpy, whispering for no reason, and starting at imaginary noises. The GM has two roads to this goal. One route is external, with the GM acting on the players' environment, perceptions, and personal knowledge or fears. The other path winds through the frightening world that the PCs inhabit and with which they interact; the players' identification with their characters transfers that fear to them. The ideal horror session involves *both* approaches.

Parallels can be seen with an effective horror movie. The audience is frightened externally: the movie is shown in the dark; jarring, nerve-wracking music constantly builds tension; and disturbing camera angles and lighting effects create nervousness. Internally, the viewers identify with the protagonist and share his fear of the horrific monster or nightmarish plot with which he has become entangled. The GM should keep in mind these twin dynamics – the external and the internal – when working to make a horror roleplaying session scary.

Who Can You Trust?

One wicked technique for building fear is to cast suspicion on one or more of the PCs. Maybe it seems clear that *one* of them is in league with sinister forces, but nobody knows which one. Perhaps the clues point to one individual – but if that's the case, there had better be some overwhelming reason for the others not to subdue, arrest, or kill him immediately. When the players start giving *each other* suspicious looks, the atmosphere will become much tenser!

With the right group of players, the GM can actually make this true! If one of the players is willing to *be* an actual monster in disguise, and can enjoy the challenge, then the others will certainly remember that adventure for a long time . . . especially the climactic, chilling moment of recognition. This "wolf in the fold" approach can sometimes work against party unity and player cooperation, so make sure the horror will be worth it.

Timing

The best way to keep the heroes guessing, particularly in a campaign full of professional occultists, is to make sure that they never feel completely safe. If they visit the spooky old graveyard at three o'clock in the afternoon, don't let them drive home safely and go to sleep in their comfy, secure beds. Arrange things so that they're detained at the cemetery until sundown. Then let the air out of their tires. Then, as they start to walk home, hit them with a wave of zombies. After they've worked their way out of that predicament, allow them to retreat to their nice, safe, suburban home – and *really* let them have it!

Whenever the players and their characters feel that they've earned a respite . . . when they believe that they're safe . . . *that's* the time to hit them with something really shocking!

Changes of Pace

Another way to guarantee that the heroes retain their fear of the horrific is to ensure that they don't face it *every* play session. This can be done overtly, by throwing in a non-horror adventure, or covertly, by setting up a scenario that *seems* to involve the uncanny but turns out to have a perfectly rational explanation. Perhaps the party wants to explore the jungles of Africa in search of lost civilizations, or maybe they have to rescue a Dependent who has been kidnapped by the mob – although in a world full of occult menaces, a supernatural mastermind might well be behind the mundane capture of a vampire-killer's daughter.

Try a haunted house that's actually the work of a mad (and murderous) electronics genius, or a series of unexplained disappearances connected with sightings of humanoids from beneath the sea . . . who turn out to be wet-suited saboteurs. A string of "vampire killings" proves to be nothing more than a clever serial killer covering his tracks. You can even play the double-reverse on this one: a real vampire might *also* be hunting the murderer – he might not want to have rumors of vampires flying about!

Props and Atmosphere

After working out the adventure, and *before* the players arrive, it's time to think about setting the mood in the gaming room. Plan the physical conditions: furniture, lighting, background noise, and any props you might use. If possible, run the session after dark. Classic horror calls for candlelight – an imaginary ghost is much more frightening in a candle's dim glow than under the blue-white glare of fluorescents. Be flexible, though. If a genemod abomination stalks the heroes through a bioweapons lab, those fluorescents – or perhaps a glowering computer monitor – would be ideal lighting.

Creepy theme music helps. Choose some horror-film soundtracks, Bach organ fugues, or Gothic rock – or grating industrial music, for futuristic horror – and play this "score" softly during the session. The music will soon drop below the players' conscious awareness, just as it does during a movie, while continuing to evoke a suspenseful mood. Sound-effects recordings *don't work,* however; they cheapen the effect of a good horror adventure. That said, if you play with a laptop handy (or better, an easily concealed smart phone), then digital screams and lightning crashes can be effective.

Suitable props can also contribute to the atmosphere. Simply setting a skull-shaped candleholder on the gaming table will remind the players of the genre. If the adventure calls for the investigators to find an ancient manuscript, scrawled in blood, then get some parchment paper and a brown calligraphy pen and *make* the scroll. When the moment comes, don't just read the players the text – hand them the actual document! (Don't worry if your calligraphy isn't up to the standard of a Cistercian monk – relevant texts would be penned by sorcerers, not scribes. And madmen have terrible handwriting.)

Pictures of monstrous foes can also help the players visualize the adventure. Consider preparing a set of "flash cards" depicting each monster to be encountered during that session's adventure (Internet image searches and a printer make this a snap). Don't hand these to the players. Instead, when an adventurer runs into a horror, flash the illustration in the half-light for just a few seconds – "You see *this!*" – before hiding it again. That single, grainy glimpse will set the players' imaginations rolling, conjuring monsters far worse than anything words could describe. This technique is especially effective in Things Man Was Not Meant To Know campaigns.

Adding Horror In

If the GM tells his players that he's running a ***GURPS Horror*** game, they'll expect encounters with the weird and the unnatural, but they may not be as frightened by them. Thus, consider *not telling the players that it's a horror campaign.* Let them think that they're playing detectives, treasure-hunters, or something else relatively prosaic. Don't let them see this book! Have them find out the hard way that they're involved with That Which Should Not Be.

Another way to throw the players a curve is to introduce horror into other types of campaigns. The classic example is the old *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* TV show, a horror story in a crime drama. Kolchak, a hard-nosed reporter, investigates a series of murders and eventually concludes that a vampire is responsible. Of course, nobody believes him, so he must hunt it down himself. You can also play horror change-up; *The X-Files* was either a conspiracy show with a lot of monsters, or the other way around. See *Horrifying Genres* (pp. 113-119) for more examples of transplanted horror.

The best way to introduce horror elements is *gradually.* Adventures that seem at first to be mundane and predictable may lead to encounters with outré horrors and unearthly phenomena. It's best to lead the players to expect a mundane ending, only to twist it into something unexpected.

The biggest problem with "transplanted horror" is that the party probably won't be equipped for horrific encounters. They're liable to lack important magic spells, psionic abilities, and skills pertaining to the occult and supernatural. The GM must be careful, lest the heroes become nothing more than powerless victims. Every foe should have a weakness that the adventurers can exploit *using the capabilities they possess.*

Alternatively, introduce an NPC who's well-suited to supernatural encounters, but who cannot use his special capabilities without the PCs' help. Maybe he's a professional exorcist, but the ghost to be exorcised speaks some language that only a PC understands. Perhaps he's physically frail, even crippled, after years of battling the unclean, forcing our heroes to valiantly defend him (and letting the players keep their rightful place in the spotlight). The GM should allow the players to come up with creative ways to use their abilities alongside those of their NPC specialist.

Finally, remember that the players signed on for the game you advertised. If you're not *positive* that they're open to horror, then save it for the next campaign.

Scenario Design

There are as many ways to build horror scenarios as there are horror GMs, but it's possible to distill a sort of general process: A *story hook* draws the heroes into the adventure and sets the stage, they encounter the horror in a *first blood* combat, they follow the plot through a few *twists,* and then they confront the evil for the *payoff.* Along the way, they may meet NPCs, decipher clues, build weapons, or just run as fast as they can to head off evil at the pass. If your campaign or horror scenario doesn't need all of these elements, then go ahead and leave them out; for example, plenty of effective horror stories just set the stage and jump right into the payoff, or have no NPCs at all. The thing to keep in mind is that, ideally, everything you *do* include should be subordinated to or directed toward creeping out the players and building the atmosphere of fear.

The Teaser

The "reality" of a horror adventure sometimes escapes the players, especially if their favorite PCs emerge unscathed from hazard after hazard. To throw a scare into the players – while simultaneously starting the campaign in a unique fashion – use a "teaser" session to get them in the right mindset.

At the beginning of the first game session, hand the players pre-generated characters with a few paragraphs of background material. These should be Plain Folks (pp. 10-11) – kids driving along a lonely back road, a band of hunters in their isolated cabin, a squad of troops patrolling a disputed boundary, etc. – and *not* heroes built with hundreds of points.

Things begin to go wrong: The engine won't start. The telephone line goes mysteriously dead. The dog disappears.

And *then* the evil strikes. Totally unprepared, the victims die horribly, probably never understanding their fate. This gives the players a good dose of fear and hopelessness without endangering the "real" PCs.

Ideally, draw the deaths out across the entire evening of play, timing the last fatality for the end of the session. *Just possibly,* one or two of the victims might escape. It's far likelier that they'll all die like trapped rats . . . or suffer madness, possession, or worse.

This is the equivalent of the horror movie's "teaser." The hapless victims were the first prey of the Awful Menace that threatens the world – and the players got to *experience* it.

After the carnage, let the players create characters for the next game session. These real PCs might even be connected to the deceased victims. They could be investigating the killing for a newspaper or a law-enforcement agency; they may be concerned relatives. Then again, there might be no connection at all – it's up to the GM. Regardless of the *heroes'* motivation, the *players* will be warier than they otherwise might have been!

If the players do a good enough job during the teaser – either tactically or as roleplayers – then this should help the real PCs later on. Perhaps one of the victims can leave a dying message or evidence. It's conceivable that someone could escape the original attack, becoming an NPC. He might provide useful intelligence, be a helpful local guide . . . or possibly reenter play as a PC, if the party needs to replace losses! The players will doubtless have a sentimental fondness for such a survivor, so if the GM kills him horribly *later,* the effect will be even greater.

The Story Hook

The opening of the horror scenario can take place wherever the heroes would normally be; the objective is to get them from there to the place where the horror lurks or ravages. Sometimes, that's as simple as having the clock strike midnight; other times, a convoluted chain of clues and events leads to the eventual climax. The initial story hook might be as stereotypical as somebody inheriting a haunted house from his uncle, or it may be deeply and intricately woven into the campaign's storyline. Working a story hook into a character hook (pp. 6-8) lets the GM hang it more plausibly and more reliably, since that gives at least one party member a reason to follow the tug. Allies, Contacts, Dependents, Enemies, Patrons, and Secrets can all bring story hooks to the PCs, either willingly (an Enemy launches a sorcerous attack), unknowingly (an Ally opens the sealed door in the basement), or unwillingly (a Dependent is kidnapped by a tribe of ghouls).

First Blood

The initial brush with the evil – often but not always a supernatural creature – is one of the most important events in a horror adventure. It's the heroes' first taste of the unexplainable impinging on an ordered world. The GM should carefully build suspense when leading up to this encounter, creating a sense of helpless doom in the players.

As the investigators follow the trail of mysterious events drawing them toward the confrontation, each encounter should be more unusual than the last. For example, in a series of murders, the first victim might be violently knifed to death; the second victim, decapitated; and the third victim, drained of all blood and his head not merely severed, but *missing.* No matter what actually caused these deaths, the eventual meeting with it will be more frightening because of the increasing degree of violence, and therefore apprehension.

Another technique is to create a pattern of deaths that inevitably points to one of the PCs as a possible victim. If a party member is an alcoholic, then the fact that all of the victims were lushes should make *everyone* uncomfortable. Some of the heroes' backgrounds could also point disturbingly toward the horror. An investigation into an alleged vengeful Indian spirit will take on a new tone if one of the investigators comes from a family that was involved in massacring Indians or violating treaties years ago.

When the enemy finally manifests, maintain the mood of increasing suspense. Instead of throwing the adversary directly into combat, leave physical trails to follow: corpses, large footprints, mysterious sounds, etc. The players should never be able to understand instantly what the menace looks like or how it operates. Always keep *something* hidden, even during the final confrontation. If the adventure ends with some mysteries left unsolved, so much the better.

Making It Different

Clues aren't the only way to introduce twists into horror roleplaying. Occasionally, an *entire scenario* can be designed from the ground up to be a twist on the larger framework of the horror campaign. One of the biggest difficulties in horror gaming is keeping each session from following an all-too-familiar format: players are presented with mystery, players figure out which supernatural monster is responsible, heroes beat up monster, mystery is solved. By turning expectations on their head, the GM can prevent "formula horror."

The Hunter Hunted: Instead of waiting for an innocent victim to come begging for help, start the adventure with an (apparently) unprovoked attack on the heroes. They will have to recover from the ambush, and then figure out what's behind it and how to stop it. Thus, the action happens at the *monster's* pace, not the *players'*.

The Changeup: A fight with a werewolf always takes place on a deserted moor? Try downtown San Francisco. The vampire is always holed up in his castle, waiting? Put him on a transatlantic 747 and see how the players deal with it! Take a stereotypical situation, one with which the players are familiar – maybe one they've already encountered – and put a spin on it that will totally warp their expectations. Figure out your own pattern, *and break it*.

Building in the Twists

One clue, or one death, or even one string of deaths might not be enough for the scenario. While a relentless series of vile murders might lead the investigators to their final confrontation, there could be a number of interludes for investigations, evading misguided police, or simply deciding whether to bring silver bullets or holy water (or both).

Whether the scenario is limited to one place or meanders through the surrounding countryside, it's helpful to keep the narrative twisted. If the investigators must uncover clues A, B, and C to find the shapeshifting aliens, let them find clue A, then C, and *then* B (or a red herring, depending on the timing). Key witnesses can tell things in flashback. The crucial letter should refer to another, missing, document. The monster's trail might break off – or double back and meet itself at an ideal spot for an ambush. If there's time, throw in the ambush and have it lead to *further* clues (a dropped medallion, the unique smell of the insects' shells, the direction of the luminous slime track, etc.).

One way to experiment with building in the twists is not to space out and reorder the clues but to dump many, many clues onto the players in short order. This strategy has a number of possible outcomes for the GM. The attempt to follow any given thread can be treated as a "standard" horror adventure, perhaps with its own twists if time allows. This gives the players a gratifying sense of choice, while still allowing the GM to plot the climax. Such a confusion of clues can simply be used as a compressed version of more conventional twists, with the horrific climax itself being the final clue that sets up the full horror. The mass of knowledge that points to evils can be seen as something innately horrible; in such a scenario (or campaign), it soon appears that any fact or piece of information holds a dark, hateful implication. This "information is dangerous" approach is particularly useful in the cosmic and conspiratorial horror styles.

The purpose of building in the twists is to keep the players off-balance, nervous, and looking around. If the narrative doesn't admit any twists, then fake them, or shorten the scenario. This uncertainty leads to contemplation of the unknown; while that's going on, the GM has a chance to build the tension and horror, or to punctuate it with more blood and horrific revelations.

The Payoff

The payoff is the big moment: Ultimate evil confronts the heroes! This is when you should pull out all the stops. If you don't scare the players now, you won't for the rest of the session.

Ideally, the payoff should occur as close as possible to the moment when the players have deduced the horror's full extent. In most cases, the longer they have to understand the horror, the less scary it seems; it's no longer the unknown, but part of the observed world. Returning to the earlier example, suppose that the players have clues A and C, plus a creepy and disturbing (but basically cosmetic) red herring. After they've cogitated on those enough, they find clue B (which sits right inside the front door of the Bad Place, perhaps). Ideally, they should instantly realize the truth – about 60 seconds before all Hell breaks loose. Since both GMs and players are fallible, this timing breaks down sometimes. That isn't fatal as long as the players are sufficiently engrossed in the scenario that they intuitively accept the unexplained, or provided that the horror is scary enough that even a period of thinking about it causes goose bumps.

No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice.

– Shirley Jackson, ***The Haunting of Hill House***

Victims: Their Creation and Abuse

For a horror campaign to be truly horrific, it requires a supply of victims. The easiest solution is to victimize the heroes, but this is rarely satisfactory in the long run (for an exception, see *The Teaser,* p. 133). Repeatedly killing off PCs will cause most players to lose interest in the game. Thus, NPC victims are needed – blood sacrifices to keep the game universe interestingly horrific.

Victim Types

Every victim should be an *individual,* ideally somebody the PCs have met, or can identify with, or at least had some responsibility to protect. This ideal isn't universal; e.g., the stereotypical "serial killer" story (and many a modern horror that riffs off this pattern) usually begins with the death of some utterly anonymous prostitute or street person. It's up to the GM to bring the dead to life in the investigation, to give the heroes a stake in the victim's right to vengeance.

Mix up the victim types below. Unless the theme of the game compels you, don't have *every* vampire feed on a stream of hookers or virgins.

The Innocent

This person is truly undeserving of the fate that the callous GM has planned for him (or, more likely, her). This could be an elderly grandfather, a small child, or a sweet and helpful babysitter. The players should be shocked and outraged at the victim's fate, and their characters should immediately plot revenge.

Joe Average

This is the everyday man on the street. Perhaps he's the newspaper vendor that one of the heroes chats with every day on the way to work, or a coworker, or the mailman. The death of Joe Average should shock the investigators simply by virtue of the fact that it's completely unexpected and inexplicable.

He Deserved It

A very satisfying type of victim is the one who *deserved* to die; e.g., a crooked cop, a street thug, or a grasping slumlord. *Not* the heroes' chief antagonist in the campaign, though – that would make things too easy! The players should find themselves torn between their feelings of glee at the demise of such a wretched soul, and their shock at another unpleasant death. And remember: if the PCs had a reason to dislike the victim, they may be suspects in his murder!

Sneaky Victim Tricks

Framing the heroes for the victims' death is only one of many ways that the GM can put a little backspin on the basic "monster kill." Carefully picking the victims, nurturing them, or even transmuting them into villains can add depth (and all-important uncertainty) to a horror campaign.

Dependents

Emphasizing danger to valued NPCs, without actually killing them, will get good roleplayers worried – and worry is an appropriate emotion. The peril need not be overt. Just remind those players whose PCs have Dependents that, in a horror campaign, the Dependent could get involved *at any time* . . . especially at night, when the moon is full.

Fiendish Long-Term Plots

A fiendish GM will create victims with well-developed personalities and introduce them long before they're needed as bodies. Build up these characters over a number of game sessions. The heroes should get to know them, maybe trust them, and perhaps even think of them as friends and allies. Certainly, the *players* ought to come to take their existence for granted: the landlady, the precinct captain who takes their unbelievable reports, the wise-ass reporter who covers their story, etc.

The players will soon come to "believe in" these NPCs, especially if they are friendly or have unusual and useful talents. Then, when something horrible happens to the victim, the effect on the players will be greater.

And it doesn't have to be a blood-and-gore ending. If the old landlady, whom the PCs have known for three game years, vanishes with no trace except a smear of green muck, *and nothing more is ever found,* the players' imaginations will haunt them for a long time.

Snake in the Grass

Here's an especially evil variation on that last technique: Create an NPC and keep him around for a long time – perhaps through a whole adventure. Then, in a later adventure, when the players have come to rely on that NPC as part of the furniture . . . have him turn out to be a villain, perhaps even a monster! A similar plot twist is to let one of the first victims turn out, in the end, to have been a monster.

Nice to See You Again

Any deceased PC immediately becomes the "property" of the GM. Between demonic possession, ghosts, zombies, fungus-infected ghoul-mutants, and the like, you never know when you'll be seeing an old friend. The timely reappearance of a dead PC – or at least his mortal shell – is guaranteed to make an impression on the players.

A Good Bad Man Is Hard to Find

Heroes deserve villains worthy of their steel (or lead, or laser beams). The players will certainly expect there to be some motive force behind all the random horror that their characters have slogged through. If that force is intelligent – a true villain – then roleplaying it gives the GM a chance to shine. The GM can also use a villain's intelligence to step up the horror a notch.

Villains and Beasts

The basic distinction between beasts and villains is that villains are intelligent. Beasts may stalk the heroes by instinct, hunt them with cunning, and attack them with subtlety, but if they don't act intelligently, then they aren't true villains. For instance, Michael Myers in *Halloween* is a beast; his attacks on the various babysitters are carried out with (only) the cunning and savagery of a predatory animal. Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is a villain; he plans to entrap the teenagers who cross him, he's motivated by revenge, and he reacts to their defenses with intelligent countermeasures.

This isn't to say that beasts must always attack in mindless waves, or have no rational behavior or motivation. They can, of course – both the unstoppable wave and the irrational attack are trademarks of the horror genre. However, it's reasonable to make a pack of werewolves at least as cunning as a pack of normal wolves, for example; that's more than enough challenge for most parties. They'll strike stragglers and the weak, they'll pull back to a safe distance for stalking when they meet resistance, and they'll try to herd the game onto unsafe ground.

If these werewolves reason out where the party is likely to be (as opposed to just hitting the same "hunting ground" every full moon), take out any observers, prepare traps or snares, strike the strongest foe (or the obvious magician) first, or in any other way show that they're calculating, reacting beings, then they've become villains. And, somewhat beside the point, the heroes are probably doomed – the GM can almost always coordinate the attacks of the villains more effectively than the players can organize their defenses.

This is one reason why most horror scenarios have only one villain (if any) at a time. The lead werewolf uses his brain and the others simply follow orders in good storm-trooper fashion. This tends to balance the scenario a little more. A single villain also helps to focus the players' fear and the GM's attention. Unless the players and GM are used to multiple-target scenarios, having several villains often just confuses the issue.

Villainous Motives

When designing a scenario – especially a horror one – always consider the villain's motive. Even if it's just a matter of deciding that the villain is a homicidal alien or a thirst-crazed vampire, *some* motivation is necessary. This will determine the villain's likely actions. If the villain is simply gripped with homicidal mania or feeding frenzy, then he'll stop at nothing to slaughter the heroes; the scenario will be a nonstop harrowing, or a "track the creature to its lair" story. If the necromancer has to open the Gate of Slumber to the Evil Dreamhound, then he'll seek to secure the Gate's location; that will probably become the Bad Place at the climax.

The question of motive also addresses whether the villain fights to the death or flees to the safety of some Even Worse Place. Most intelligent beings, and almost all animals, won't fight to the death without a tremendously important reason.

It's Only the Wind

Many legends of the supernatural are imaginative explanations for mundane mysteries, such as footprints or strange noises. Mournful howls late at night can be attributed to everything from a lone dog to the blowing of the wind, but people find werewolf legends much more exciting! If a story like this catches on, then there are those who will go looking for *it* instead of the true cause. This leads to a self-fulfilling-prophecy situation in which the legend-hunter convinces himself that *anything* he comes across is evidence for the legend's existence.

Such a hunt can be a good break from regular horror fare, and will throw the players for a loop when they realize that the mysterious ghost that haunts the town cemetery doesn't exist at all. It can also redirect their thinking toward more scientific approaches to investigation – if they had dismissed the ghost legend from the start and examined the evidence, they could have saved themselves a lot of work. Some legends may be deliberately manufactured, perhaps to attract tourism, or to divert attention from criminal activity . . . or from a different, but nevertheless *real,* supernatural phenomenon.

Remember that many people regard *all* supernatural legends as hoaxes. In games set in the present, this will include most of the NPCs whom the PCs try to impress. Convincing others of the truth behind the legends requires skill in Diplomacy, Public Speaking, or even History or Anthropology. In terms of reaction rolls, occult investigators need "Very Good" or better reactions to gain assistance from the authorities, who are the biggest skeptics of all. The GM should apply reaction modifiers based on the quality of evidence that the party presents, with physical evidence garnering the largest bonuses.

The GM should know that reason, and perhaps even let the players in on it in the investigatory sessions or early twists that open the scenario. This can be used – and *should* be used, if possible – to build the atmosphere of fear. Dropping the clue that the Queen of the Blood Spiders is willing to do anything to protect her eggs should unnerve any player who stops to think about what "anything" could mean.

Demon? Manipulative's kinda in the job description.

– Ruby, in ***Supernatural,*** *"No Rest for the Wicked"*

Power

Perhaps the most common villainous motivation is power. Something must be gained, destroyed, or used to increase the villain's power, or some opponent (such as the heroes) must be killed to ensure the villain's power. This action need not make a lot of sense on the surface; necromancers or cultists might actually gain power through random killings. The reason why the villain wants this power is another motivation entirely (often greed, political conquest, or one of the other motives on this list) – power for power's sake is a particularly sterile motive for a proper villain. Beasts almost never act to increase their power; advance planning and forethought are not bestial hallmarks.

Survival

Some villains – and many beasts – are motivated by survival to do the awful things they do. For instance, vampires have to drink human blood to survive. This can be a perfectly good engine for a basic horror scenario: villain slays innocents, heroes track villain to lair, and battle ensues. If the villain is a recurring one, intended to power a story arc or the entire campaign, then it's important to determine his motivation for the specific actions in the scenario. For example, a vampire prince might be basically driven by survival, but need a magic key to increase his power over the dream realms. The scenario is about the search for, and attempted theft of, that key. Thus, it concerns the villain's attempt to gain extra power to ensure his survival.

Self-Defense

Many villains are motivated by self-defense – the pesky heroes keep interfering with their plans and trying to kill them! One can hardly blame an intelligent villain for wanting to take the initiative for a change. Villains might also be defending themselves against the actions of NPCs or society at random; e.g., the woodcutter has ventured into the Unseelie grove, so the woodcutter's village (which happens to contain the PCs) must be destroyed before the sacred black oak is cut. Beasts, too, are often driven by self-defense.

Revenge

A variant on self-defense is revenge: the villain feels wronged by one of the heroes, somebody else nearby, or society at large. A great many psychics, mad scientists, and other "intellectual" villains seem to be driven by revenge. Vengeful villains often fail to take rational precautions, and may use suicidal techniques. This can make them harder to stop but easier to track.

Dark Religious Mania

The villain worships a powerful god, or even a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know, who demands sacrifice. Perhaps he must perform some horrific ritual to open the way for the Antichrist. He objects to good deities (and their worshippers) on theological grounds, and seeks to undermine and destroy their domain. This might be seen as another version of power; indeed, dark religious mania is a common motivation for power-driven scenarios. However, it's so prevalent – especially in tales of black magic or cosmic horror – that it merits its own entry. A god capable of inspiring religious mania in *beasts* would be a very disturbing deity indeed.

Forbidden Knowledge

Ever since Frankenstein (or Faust, or Prometheus), horror villains have been driven by the desire to know too much. This can seem similar to insanity (or no motivation) to the uninformed. In the horror genre, even seeking magical powers sometimes carries with it a dangerous cost; magic itself is something that man was not meant to know. This motive has much in common with both power and dark religious mania. Beasts are just about never motivated by hunger for forbidden knowledge. *Brains,* yes – knowledge, not so much.

Twisted Honor

Perfect for pulp-style horror, the villain works from some "heroic" code, now turned to the service of evil. Perhaps the villain is a mercenary hired to serve a darker force, but one who honors his contract to the letter. An immortal villain, like a vampire or a lich (or a conspiracy), might be fighting for a long-forgotten cause, such as the throne of the Merovingian kings or the crusade against the Albigensians. Even if the villain has another motivation entirely, he may have a *personal* code to which he clings – he grants dwarves a quick death, he'll never violate a temple of the Forgotten God, or any enemy has the right to challenge him to single combat. This can add some depth and variety to otherwise-identical ravening fiends.

Sheer Malevolence

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The villain has become so powerful that mere morality means nothing; killing, torture, and the rest of it are simply enjoyable hobbies. This seems to be the motivation for quite a few villains, and it isn't even terribly unrealistic. Many beasts ravage for the sheer joy of it, too – especially in fantasy horror. The GM should expend extra effort to make sheerly malevolent villains interesting; absolute power also leads to eventual boredom.

No Motivation

Some villains have *no* motivation – at least, not one that the heroes can ascertain. Cinematic psycho killers seem to fall into this category, barring murky Freudian theories about their past. The villain's actions might merely be coincidence; Albuquerque just happens to be in the saucers' flight path. Nihilistic cosmic horror draws its power from the notion that nothing has any purpose whatsoever, including the acts of Cosmic Deities, Ancient Ones, and their Minions. And the deeds of beasts often have no explanation beyond instinct or random chance.

OPPORTUNITY

The GM must consider how the villains will gain the opportunity to blight the heroes' existence. In some scenarios, the players will take care of this matter themselves, as the whole point is to track down and confront the villain. In others, especially those climaxing in the Invaded House, the opportunity needs to be built in. The GM should approach this problem by answering two questions: "What is the scariest way for it to work?" and "What makes internally consistent sense?"

Scary Opportunities

Scary opportunities happen when the heroes are somehow constrained. They might be physically restrained, although most players object to "capture" scenarios. They could be hindered by the presence of witnesses (e.g., they can't shoot the demon-child while the cops are watching), or of dependents or innocents (e.g., the werewolves attack while the hero is walking his date home from the movies). They may simply have limits on their time and attention. If the GM is using the mass of clues as his approach to building in the twists, the already-distracted and harassed players can be pelted with omens, stalkings, attacks, and general atmospherics. Time these elements so that the players are just about to snap when they reach the scenario's climax – or move the payoff to the place in time (and location in the game world) where the snap will happen.

Sensible Opportunities

Sensible opportunities depend on the heroes' defenses and the villains' or beasts' means and motives. The PCs should seldom have perfect defenses in horror games (especially since the GM should be reluctant to pass out such things), but there ought to be some logical way for the villains to find the flaw. If this "logical way" is the torture and mutilation of the party's trusted butler – whose maimed corpse can show up at any time for maximum effect – then so much the better! Neither beasts nor villains normally make suicide attacks. Traditional vampires don't attack at noon on Sunday – that isn't sensible *or* scary.

A particularly fiendish villainous opportunity is one that the adventurers themselves have set up. If they've taken a ring from the body of the zombie that attacked them, perhaps the villain can use it as a magical connection to the person wearing it. If they've read aloud the inscription carved on the tomb wall, it could trigger the mummy's curse or the wrath of the dark gods. In Invaded House scenarios (p. 130), if the heroes have brought something evil or unnatural (e.g., the aforementioned zombie ring) into a place of safety, it can be the means of entry for the horrors outside.

Cowards Die a Thousand Deaths

After a few sessions of horror, the alleged heroes might start to take what seem to be sensible precautions: they stop going into the crypt, simply dynamite the old deserted mill, never read any eldritch scrolls, always leave the chest sealed, and possibly even move to the next duchy to grow the perfect avocado. In short, they turn into cowards. Cowardice may be an understandable reaction in the world of most horror roleplaying games, but it should never be a wise one. This is because it short-circuits the atmosphere of fear for the players, and it spoils all the GM's fun.

The GM should go out of his way to get the action moving. If the heroes have character hooks or disadvantages (or skills or advantages!) that make them especially susceptible to curiosity, fascination, or even possession, the GM should invoke them to short-circuit cowardly strategies. The priest might find himself dreaming of the sealed chest night after night until finally he dreams that he opens it – and awakens to find himself standing beside the chest, which has somehow become unlocked. Another great way to drag the action back to the Bad Place or into the tension of a horror scenario is with NPCs. If the party won't do it, let their trusted mentor happen to read the eldritch parchment aloud, or have someone's sister wander into the crypt at night.

Most important, the GM should make every effort to demonstrate that the adventurers *need* the knowledge or accomplishment that they're avoiding; e.g., if they refuse to read the blasphemous tome, they'll never find the spell that short-circuits the lich lord's mental powers. This demonstration can be active rather than passive: the villain steals the sealed chest, and opens it when the stars are right for the evils within to prosper; dynamiting the mill only gives the festering Thing In The Basement more time to grow; and so on. The players should learn that there are only two choices in horror: face your fears now or let them grow stronger. If they learn this at the expense of one or two heroes' limbs, sanity, or lives, then that's just part of the tuition.

Who Threatens Whom?

The nature of the hero-villain relationship is a fertile source of plots and stratagems. It creates choice opportunities for villainous action, just as it prevents others. Do the heroes knowingly oppose the villain? Does the villain knowingly oppose them? Often, one is unaware of the other's existence. The heroes may not know of the cult of the Lord Beneath the Ice, while the cult's vile auguries have warned them of the heroes' plans. Alternatively, the cult might not have known that this town had its own mystical defenders when they set up shop; the heroes have the advantage of seeing the evil first.

"First contact" between heroes and villain plays a vital role in determining the villainous reaction. If the heroes surprise the villain, he might lash out earlier and with more force than he otherwise would have. If he knows of the heroes in advance, he may try to ambush them, conspire against them, or suborn them. He might even *befriend* one of them, acting as a trusted NPC and lulling his victim into a false state of confidence. A particularly fiendish GM could introduce such a "friendly villain" from the beginning of the campaign – perhaps as the party's patron or mentor! Such a villain may simply use the heroes to clear out his competition so that he's the only force of the Dark Occult left in the whole province, or he might play them as pawns in an even bigger and darker game.

Fear, Madness, and Decay

Most games – even many horror games! – can get along just fine with the rules for fear and madness in the ***Basic Set.*** But some GMs, and some players, may wish to add variety to their terror. Read on . . .

Fright Checks

The key game mechanic for horror roleplaying in ***GURPS*** is the Fright Check (pp. B360-361). Possible triggers for a Fright Check include seeing horrific monsters, discovering their freshly killed victims, and witnessing suitably creepy signs of the supernatural. Modifiers depend on the circumstances, and on the person making the Fright Check. A hardened, battle-weary team of black ops will react quite differently from a coterie of decadent, absinthe-drinking, visionary surrealists – the black ops might chew through a pack of werewolves without breaking a sweat, while the surrealists may remain calm in the face of hallucinatory specters pouring from a corpse's mouth. The adventurer's species can also alter the equation; *any* encounter in the dark should carry at least an extra -1 on Fright Checks for humans, while cave-dwelling, nocturnal hobgoblins might instead take penalties for daylight encounters!

Below are further Fright Check modifiers for a variety of horrific situations. The GM is free to alter or ignore any modifier or optional rule that seems inappropriate, and may find the following option worth exploring:

Ad-Hoc Fright Checks: Mechanically rolling, looking up, and applying Fright Checks can at times actually snap the players out of the mood of fear you've all worked to create. In such circumstances, the players may allow the GM simply to assign 1d seconds of stun and move on. After the action, the players can roll "true" Fright Checks and receive any quirks, disadvantages, or other ill effects. Such ad-hoc gaming can rub some players the wrong way; in this as in all things horrific, the GM should work with his players to increase cooperation and build horror.

Monsters

A monster's intrinsic Fright Check modifier can range from -1 (a swarm of rats) to -10 or worse (a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know). Many factors affect monsters' "scariness," including their number, familiarity, and perceived proximity (p. B360). *Perceived* threat is what matters – a giant space virus might be miles away, but if it can cross interstellar distances, then you have no doubt that it can get to you in seconds, so you get no bonus for distance. Additional monster modifiers include:

Size: +1 for small monsters (dog-sized or smaller); no modifier for human-sized ones; -1 for anything bear-sized through elephantine; -3 for truly huge monsters (like Godzilla or King Kong); or -6 for mind-boggling sizes ("Look! The giant space virus is blocking out the sun!"). As with proximity, these modifiers rate perceptions, and are subjective – *don't* use the monster's Size Modifier.

Unusual Appearance: -1 for disgusting features (e.g., a trail of slime or a foul odor); -2 for alien appearance (e.g., a five-sided head with one eye and two mouths on each side); or -3 for something that utterly defies the laws of biology and physics.

Multiple Fright Checks

In some situations, the players may have to roll several Fright Checks for the heroes – usually as thing go from bad to worse.

Example: The party breaks through some rotten wallboard at a point where their map indicates another room. Sure enough, there's a small alcove beyond the hole. They shine a light inside, revealing a skeleton chained to the far wall. (Everyone makes a Fright Check at no modifier.)

One investigator steps in, curses as a pair of rats scurry for a hole in the far wall, and examines the skeleton more closely. "Judging from these marks, I'd say this poor fellow was eaten alive by rats!" (Everyone makes another Fright Check at -2, for a grisly death.)

Then, someone else spots a reflection in the dim lantern light, and asks, "What's that on his finger?" The closest PC examines the finger and then recoils in horror. "Good Lord! I recognize that ring! It's Dr. Henderson!" (After a few screams, everyone makes *another* Fright Check at -2, because the victim was a friend.)

The modifiers for sequential Fright Checks aren't normally cumulative. When a gradually revealed horror forces several Fright Checks, apply each new modifier to only one Fright Check. For instance, in the example above, the -2 to the *second* Fright Check (". . . eaten alive by rats!") wouldn't affect the *third* one ("It's Dr. Henderson!"). Repeated Fright Checks can still take a toll, however.

Cumulative Effects of Fear

Heroes in a horror campaign will be exposed to *many* frightening situations; therefore, the GM may wish to make Fright Checks more difficult as the victim becomes more frightened. To do this, apply -1 to subsequent Fright Checks for every *failed* Fright Check. Each *successful* Fright Check removes -1 from this penalty as the victim "regains his composure," erasing the penalty but never granting a bonus. The cumulative penalty endures *for one adventure only,* assuming the investigators get a certain amount of R&R between adventures.

Example: Agatha Witherspoon misses a Fright Check, so she has -1 on her next one. She misses that, too, and now has -2. She succeeds at her third Fright Check despite this, so her penalty for the fourth will be -1.

Some *Fright Check Table* results – notably new Phobias and permanent IQ loss – will also negatively affect future Fright Checks. Such effects are *in addition to* cumulative modifiers, if using this option.

For another take on cumulative fear effects, see *Stress and Derangement* (pp. 141-142).

Dead Bodies

Most modern-day people are unfamiliar with death; they must make a Fright Check upon encountering a cadaver. In campaigns set prior to the "professionalization of death" (around TL6), or with PCs from less-fastidious environments, the GM may waive this roll for unremarkable dead bodies, and reduce penalties for more disturbing corpses by -1. Many factors affect how scary such an encounter is, among them the body's appearance and relationship to the viewer (p. B360), and these additional considerations:

Death: -2 if witnessing not just a corpse but someone dying. *Exceptions:* As a killer is unlikely to find his own victim scary, he need only make a Fright Check if his victim's subsequent behavior is vividly unnatural. However, an individual forced to "put down" someone he knows before *or after* that person turns undead must make a Fright Check with the extra -2 *and* the appropriate relationship modifier below. At the GM's option, someone who wishes to shoot his zombified mother in the head, drive a stake through his vampire daughter's heart, etc. must roll the Fright Check *before* doing so!

Number and Type of Dead: Finding a single human body, or witnessing one death, is considered the norm. Larger numbers ("Come here, sergeant, the basement's packed with 'em!") give -1; incredible numbers (an entire city) give -3. If the victim is an animal, a Fright Check is still required, but at +4. A skeleton gives no additional modifier, but a partially decomposed body gives an extra -2.

Proximity: Only the two extremes of distance give any modifier. An encounter at a great distance (more than a quarter-mile) is at +1; one at close quarters (you open the door and the body falls on top of you) is at -1.

Victim's Relationship to Character: -6 if the victim was a Dependent (p. B360) – but even if he *wasn't* a Dependent, apply -4 for a loved one, -2 for a friend, or -1 for an acquaintance.

Bizarre and Supernatural Happenings

There's no limit to the weird things a GM can do to the players! This loose category includes events like turning on the faucet and getting slime instead of water, finding a dead cat in your freezer, or coming across an entire wall that's crawling with six-inch cockroaches. In general, the more people affected, the more danger involved, and the stranger the event, the more severe the Fright Check penalty. Some examples:

An apparition in a mirror; a picture falls from the wall: no modifier
An unnatural howling in the dead of night; all the doors in a house slam shut simultaneously: -1
A wall covered with loathsome insects; blood runs from the faucets: -3
Attacked by furniture: -5
The garden opens up and zombies crawl out: -7
The skies tear apart; the oceans turn to blood: -10

Forgotten Lore and Horrible Secrets

Especially in games of psychological and cosmic horror, the horror might come not only from monsters and corpses, but also from the heroes' discovery of horrifying truths about the world, themselves, or their place in the universe. These discoveries can require Fright Checks. Since much horror magic forces the caster to confront directly, accept, and indeed invite such knowledge, even casting a spell might demand a Fright Check! For rules, see *Fearsome Magic* in ***GURPS Thaumatology.***

Whether a Fright Check is required in a given case depends on the campaign. In a traditional Gothic horror game, discovering that one's grandfather went mad might demand such a Fright Check; in a gritty, alien-hunting black-ops game, only the realization that an alien race is pulling the ops' strings is likely to shake them to the core. In general, the more clearly and completely the new discovery reveals an Awful Truth threatening the heroes' sanity or worldview (or even the worldview that they still desperately wish to believe in), the greater the Fright Check penalty. Some examples:

This information demonstrates the Awful Truth, but might be explained away (e.g., the graphically realistic graffiti art in the subways shows ghouls killing people): no modifier

This information clearly demonstrates the Awful Truth; rejecting it takes willful denial (e.g., this transit police report clearly indicates the presence of a ghoul colony in the New York subways): -1

This information shows the Awful Truth goes deeper, or has wider meaning, than previously thought (e.g., these diaries prove that a group of madmen have spread ghoul colonies to Oregon): -3

The Awful Truth strikes directly at your life or beliefs (e.g., your grandfather somehow became a ghoul and faked his death): -3

Knowing this information, or casting this spell, assuredly opens you or your loved ones up to evil, madness, or Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (e.g., your grandfather infected your children with the ghoul virus when he last visited you): -5

The Awful Truth has global scope (e.g., the ghoul cult has existed for centuries, and controls major healthcare institutions): -7

The Awful Truth strikes at the core of your identity (e.g., your grandfather initiated you into the ghoul cult as a child and erased your memory of it until now): -7

This knowledge, or spell, could destroy the world – perhaps it's doing so right now (e.g., the ghoul cult has laced this year's flu vaccine with the ghoul virus): -10

Stress and Derangement

In some horror, especially horror dealing with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, certain frights can blast the sanity from those who behold (or discover) them. The Thing simply *cannot* exist – the mortal mind cannot perceive it and remain sane. Without going the full Lovecraft, a horror campaign might still posit a difference between simple terror and adrenaline shock, and madness-inducing visions and experiences. One way to draw this distinction is to separate Fright Checks into two categories: ordinary Fright Checks, which cause *Stress,* and *Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks,* which cause *Derangement*.

In this model, failing an ordinary Fright Check causes the effects on the *Fright Check Table* and adds -1 to Stress – or -3 on a critical failure. Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks work similarly, but worsen Derangement instead of Stress. The victim has a cumulative penalty to *all* Fright Checks equal to current (Stress + Derangement)/2, rounded *against* him. Unforgiving cosmic horror games with truly sanity-blasting stimuli may halve only the Stress penalty!

Not Just Stunned

The *Fright Check Table* (pp. B360-361) depends a lot on "stunned" results. In short (one- or two-second) bursts, there's little wrong with that – but when stun lingers on, players can find themselves spending an entire combat with nothing to do but defend at -4. (Fainting is even worse, but it's *intended* to turn the victim into monster bait.) While the GM should try to make combats terrifying enough to capture everyone's attention, even those playing inactive characters, there are several alternatives to stun:

Down the List: The player can always suggest a *worse* (but perhaps more fun to roleplay!) result from further down the *Fright Check Table.* The GM should make sure that this choice is at least as inconvenient – if not as tiresome – as being stunned.

Flight or Frenzy: The alliterative alternatives to "freeze." After one second of stun, the character must either flee the scene at his highest Move or attack the frightening stimulus as if Berserk. If he already has a similar disadvantage (Cowardice or Berserk), he must roll vs. the *lower* of Will or that disadvantage's self-control number to snap out of it.

Stun is Fun: Provided that the character isn't doing anything useful, and only defends at -4, he need not just stand there. He might run around in little circles having hysterics (roll his direction randomly each turn, as for *Scatter,* p. B414), or collapse and moan, or scream at the top of his lungs, or rant and gibber, or anything along those lines. If the GM agrees that the move is tactically useless, he may even let the victim try to take pictures, frantically text his location, or pull out his gun only to drop it from nerveless fingers and chase it along the floor. The GM should allow any free action during "horror stun" that wasn't caused by a creature deliberately attempting to freeze its victims in place.

While Stress and Derangement are averaged for Fright Checks, record them separately – they work differently in other respects.

Stress

Stress represents temporary jitters caused by being startled. It's shed at the rate of -1 per 10 minutes spent in mental relaxation, defined as any situation in which +4 or better for "routine tasks" (p. B345) would apply, from target shooting to a Sunday drive. Much as a meal while resting restores one extra FP, the GM may rule that certain indulgences (brandy, massage, sex, etc.) erase an extra point of Stress.

The GM is welcome to apply Stress penalties not only to Fright Checks, but also to self-control rolls (thus, Stress can make Bad Temper flare or turn a drink into a binge), to skill rolls that demand a steady hand (e.g., Explosives and Surgery), and even to HT rolls for sexual performance, resisting minor ailments, etc. Individuals with Fearlessness *can* apply its bonus to negate this penalty, but Fearlessness can only give a net bonus on a genuine Fright Check.

Stress Limit: A character's Stress limit is -Will (e.g., -11 for Will 11). After that, convert further Stress gains directly into Derangement.

Derangement

Derangement represents lasting mental harm resulting from Sanity-Blasting Fright Checks, excessive Stress, or (depending on the campaign) bad drugs, sentient brain parasites, malevolent magic, and evil experiments. At the end of any day that brings no new Stress *or* Derangement, someone with Derangement may roll against Will, with success meaning he sheds -1 in Derangement penalties. The care of a proper therapist with Psychology (Clinical) or Physician (Psychiatric) at 12+ gives +1 to this roll – and the therapist can roll against his skill once a day to erase *another* -1 in Derangement.

The GM may apply Derangement as a penalty to Influence rolls as well as to Fright Checks. It's easy enough to pass as sane when just sitting around (explaining why there's no *reaction* penalty), but a loose grip on reality is harder to hide when actively trying to manipulate others. Derangement also penalizes any roll required to establish sanity; e.g., before a judge or when interviewing to leave the madhouse. Fearlessness never offsets Derangement!

Derangement Limit: A character's Derangement limit is also -Will. After that, convert further Derangement into permanent mental disadvantage points!

The Downward Spiral

Thus, each failed Fright Check means failing more Fright Checks, more often. As this goes on, you grow shaky and skittish. Then you become withdrawn and freaky. And *then* you pick up long-term mental problems. You can get rid of the shakes easily enough, but craziness takes work, and lasting craziness requires points.

The GM decides whether a particular treatment for insanity can relieve Stress and/or Derangement. Therapy might be medical, magical, or something else. Any cure capable of erasing -1 point of full-on mental disadvantages can remove -2 in Derangement or *all* accumulated Stress.

Tumors

Some aberrant or "mad" behavior differs from insanity as discussed under *Cause* (p. 143) in that it's the brain's response to a foreign body – often a tumor. An Affliction or other attack that causes long-term madness might actually inflict a tumor on the target's brain rather than disturb his brain chemistry or otherwise internally unbalance him. Other "external" causes of mental disorders include heavy-metal poisoning, stimulant or alkaloid abuse or withdrawal, syphilis, temporal-lobe epilepsy, Lyme disease, and electrolyte disorders.

Roll against Psychology (Clinical) or Diagnosis to identify a malady with such an external cause. Even in the real world, surgery *does* work on insanity caused by a tumor; use the rules for cinematic neurosurgery (see p. 145). Where appropriate, conditions with external causes other than tumors can be treated using the rules for treating poisons (p. B439) or diseases (p. B443). For this purpose, each character point of "insanity" disadvantages is equivalent to a point of toxic damage.

Demonic Possession

Many cultures, including Biblical Palestine, believed insanity to be caused by demonic possession – and in a horror game, it might be! In a secret-magic campaign (pp. 110-111), a *successful* Psychology (Clinical) skill roll reveals only that the possessed patient's malady has no known cause. The GM may impose a "skepticism" penalty of -3 or worse on such rolls. Failure diagnoses the patient's problem as conventional madness; psychiatric drugs (p. 146) prescribed for it may reduce the symptoms but automatically come with -10-point side effects.

In *any* campaign, diagnosing demonic possession requires a successful roll against Expert Skill (Demonology), Occultism, Theology, or similar – or in some backgrounds, use of a supernatural capability like Detect (Demons). Curing it calls for Exorcism (p. B193).

INSANITY

Insanity isolates us. It leaves us uncertain: Did we actually experience that, or are we losing it? It's unnatural almost by definition, since it's defined as radical departure from normality. In short, it is horror.

Frenzied cultists, sudden madness-inducing revelations, and cosmic phobias didn't begin with Lovecraft – insanity and horror have been linked since at least the time of the ancient Greek tragedians. Insanity as a theme likewise isn't restricted to cosmic horror.

Psychological horror can center on the hero's disintegrating sanity; surrealism and dream horror can paint a symbolic picture of an unhinged mind; and splatter can bring home the impermanence and artificiality of all normality in the first place.

Cause

Some mental illness is caused by long-term exposure to mind-altering conditions: childhood abuse, intense combat, unrelenting stress, brainwashing attempts, heavy psychoactive drug use, etc. Other conditions (e.g., alcoholic mania, clinical depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder) appear to have a genetic component. Still other mental illnesses manifest themselves suddenly, after either childhood trauma or brain injury. In many horror games – especially those modeling the "faint or go mad" literary convention that began with the Gothics, flowered in the Victorian age, and climaxed in the pulps – seeing terrifying horrors will drive you mad, whether for a few hours, for a few weeks, or *forever.* Below are rules for the GM who wants to recreate this feel.

Fright and Madness Checks

Whenever a Fright Check is called for, roll it and determine its results as usual, and then apply the following as an overlay on the results:

- *Fright Check result is measured in* ***seconds*** (results **4-12, 14-16**). Roll for or select a *short-term* condition from the Madness Table of the GM's choice. The victim suffers the condition for 2d seconds with a self-control number (if applicable) of 6. This doesn't lower his point value.
- *Fright Check result is measured in* ***minutes*** *or* ***hours*** (results **17-21, 26-29, 31, 33**). Roll for or select a *medium-term* condition from the Madness Table of the GM's choice. The victim suffers the condition for either 1d hours or 1d days – at the GM's discretion – with a self-control number (if applicable) of 9. This doesn't lower his point value.
- *Fright Check result is* ***drastic*** or ***permanent*** (results **13, 22-25, 30, 32, 34-40+**). Roll for or select a *long-term* condition from the Madness Table of the GM's choice. The victim suffers from this condition permanently unless bought off or treated (see *Cure,* pp. 144-146). This *does* lower his point value!

The GM may replace the *Fright Check Table* result with the overlay, or combine the two, or otherwise tweak the outcome for story purposes. However, unless he intends to be extremely cruel, the replacement or overlay for a *permanent* result should have the same total disadvantage value as the original result.

Example: The GM might replace the -15-point physical disadvantage from result **24** with a -15-point mental disadvantage; or a -5-point physical and a -10-point mental disadvantage; or two -15-point mental disadvantages with self-control rolls of 15 (for -7 points each) and a physical quirk; etc.

The goal here *isn't* to provide a realistic experience of insanity – which would be unpleasant in the extreme for everyone and possibly offensive in the bargain – but to produce a satisfyingly scary dramatic experience. The madness, in true Gothic (and Freudian) fashion, should somehow mirror the trauma that caused it, or echo the story's overarching themes. Another choice is a recurring condition: whenever the victim fails a Fright Check, he suffers from the same syndrome! By adjusting self-control numbers, adding minor Unnatural Features ("bone-white hair" is a classic horror standby) and quirks, etc., the GM can custom-build a fitting result at any point value. The Madness Tables that follow are merely examples; the GM should adapt them to suit his campaign's tone and themes, or even construct his own, whether using the afflictions described under *Condition* (p. 144) or from scratch.

> *What would your feelings be, seriously, if your cat or your dog began to talk to you, and to dispute with you in human accents? You would be overwhelmed with horror. I am sure of it. And if the roses in your garden sang a weird song, you would go mad.*
>
> *– Arthur Machen, "The White People"*

Madness Table (Gothic)

Roll (1d)	Condition
Short-Term Conditions	
1	Chills (-2 to DX) for 1d seconds
2	Hysterics (Sobbing) (p. 144) for 2d seconds
3	Flashbacks (Severe) (p. B136) for 2d seconds
4	Nightmares (p. B144) for 1d nights
5	Pyromania (p. B150) for 2d minutes
6	Echolalia (p. 144) for 1d minutes
Medium-Term Conditions	
1	Confused (p. B129) for 1d hours
2	Phantom Voices (Diabolical) (p. B148) for 1d hours
3	Hysterical Blindness, equivalent to Blindness (p. B124), for 2d hours
4	Panic Disorder (p. 144) for 1d hours
5	Stunned for 1d seconds, then Infantile Regression (p. 144) for 1d hours
6	Sleepwalker (p. B154) for 1d nights
Long-Term Conditions	
1	Lunacy (p. B143)
2	Psychogenic Amnesia (p. 144)
3	Infantile Regression (p. 144)
4	Obsession (p. B146)
5	Mania (p. 144)
6	Split Personality (p. B156)

Madness Table (Gritty)

Roll (1d)	***Condition***
Short-Term Conditions	
1	Hysterics (Laughing) (below) for 2d seconds
2	Aphasia (below) for 2d seconds
3	Homicidal Mania (below) for 3d seconds
4	Suicidal Mania (below) for 2d seconds
5	Mild Catatonia, equivalent to Slave Mentality (p. B154), for 2d seconds
6	Combat Paralysis (p. B127) for 2d seconds
Medium-Term Conditions	
1	Psychogenic Amnesia (below) for 1d-2 days (minimum 1 day)
2	Obsession ("Keep this random object or person utterly safe") (p. B146) for 3d hours
3	Aphasia (below) for 2d hours
4	Addictive Disorder (below) for 1d days
5	Motor Tension Anxiety (below) for 1d days
6	Hebephrenia (below) for 2d hours
Long-Term Conditions	
1	Depression (below)
2	Religious Mania (below)
3	Manic-Depressive (p. B143)
4	Night Terrors (below)
5	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (below)
6	Panic Disorder (below)

Condition

The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) lists 297 disorders in its nearly 900 pages. ***GURPS Horror*** doesn't – it favors thematic juice over medical rigor. The conditions listed below come from both horror and medical literature, with the aim of providing variety to the GM customizing Madness Tables for his campaign's theme, genre, and mode. They don't all appear on the sample tables, and the GM is encouraged to add more besides!

This list omits as obvious any disorder with the same name as the disadvantage that models it; e.g., Lunacy, Obsession, and Phobia. It tackles less-obvious conditions, many of these best modeled using *several* possible traits. The most characteristic disadvantages appear first in each case, but mental illnesses are syndromes drawing in many potential symptoms and behaviors – the GM is free to mix and match to achieve needed point totals for long-term madness, and to choose whatever seems dramatic for shorter bouts.

Addictive Disorder: Addiction; Alcoholism; Lecherousness; Compulsive Gambling.

Aphasia: Stuttering; Cannot Speak.

Conversion Disorder: Chronic Pain; Compulsive Behavior (Attention-Seeking).

Depression: Chronic Depression; Indecisive; Guilt Complex; Low Self-Image.

Eating Disorder: Compulsive Behavior (Dirt-Eating); Gluttony; Obsession (Fasting).

Echolalia: Odious Personal Habit (Repeats others' speech).

Hebephrenia: Stuttering; Delusions; Compulsive Behavior (Giggling).

Homicidal Mania: Uncontrollable Appetite (Murder); Bloodlust; Berserk.

Hysterics: Compulsive Behavior (Sobbing or Laughing) (as Coughing or Sneezing, p. B428); Bad Temper; Noisy.

Infantile Regression: Delusion (Major; "I'm 10 years old."); Confused; Easy to Read; Fearfulness.

Intermittent Explosive Disorder: Impulsiveness; Bad Temper; Berserk.

Mania: Overconfidence; On the Edge; Less Sleep.

Motor Tension Anxiety: Neurological Disorder (Mild); Odious Personal Habit (Twitchy); Unfit.

Night Terrors: Nightmares; Light Sleeper; Insomniac.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Low Self-Image; Phobia (Dirt); Hidebound; Compulsive Behavior.

Panic Disorder: Panic Attacks (pp. 26-27); Shyness (Crippling); Phobia (Open Spaces).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Chronic Depression; Guilt Complex; Nightmares; Panic Attacks (pp. 26-27).

Psychogenic Amnesia: Delusion (Major; "I don't know any of you people or how I got here"); Low Self-Image.

Religious Mania: Compulsive Behavior (Prayer); Fanaticism (Religious); Delusions; Megalomania.

Schizophrenia: Short Attention Span; Delusions or Phantom Voices; Paranoia; Jealousy; Stuttering.

Suicidal Mania: On the Edge; Guilt Complex.

Cure

Standard Fright Checks, *Fright and Madness Checks* (pp. 143-144), *Derangement* (p. 142), etc. can result in permanent quirks, Phobias, and other disadvantages. Such long-term conditions become part of the sufferer's character description, reducing his overall point value. He can remove these by spending earned character points as described under *"Buying Off" Disadvantages* (p. B121), with one caveat: Problems eliminated this way don't actually disappear until *at least* one month has passed in the game world per point bought off.

Example: Sara's character, Lady Hindmarch, acquires Obsession (Destroy all vampires!) [-10] after an unfortunate run-in with le Comte de Tienne. Sara immediately spends 10 earned character points to buy off the disadvantage. However, Lady Hindmarch will suffer her Obsession for at least 10 game months from the time of her narrow escape. Even after that point, Sara may well wish to continue to roleplay her as resolutely anti-vampire.

Therapy

Anyone under the care of a competent mental health professional (someone with Physician (Psychiatric) at 12+) can get help recovering. The therapist rolls against Physician (Psychiatric) to treat the patient. At the GM's discretion, success with Mind Reading, Brain Hacking, Hypnotism, or something similar – or an accomplishment such as entering the patient's dreams using Dreaming – may give +1 or more on this roll. A successful therapy roll means the patient gains one "bonus" character point that he can apply only to buying off his condition; critical success grants *two* points. Failure has no effect.

Critical failure *costs* the patient a point; either it exacerbates his condition by adding a quirk or lowering a self-control number, or it removes a previously gained bonus point.

A patient undergoing outpatient therapy (at least two hours a week with the therapist) may benefit from one therapy roll per game month. A patient under full-time care, either at home or in an institution, receives a therapy roll once per game *week*. If at any point during his treatment he fails a Fright Check for a shock similar to that which unhinged him, he immediately loses all *unspent* bonus points from therapy!

At TL7, a physician who has made a successful therapy roll for a patient can attempt a separate Physician (Psychiatric) roll to prescribe psychiatric drugs (p. 146) for that patient after three months of game time have passed. At TL8+, only one month need elapse after a success.

Variations on these rules include:

Cinematic Shock Therapy: In a cinematic campaign – or one featuring ultra-tech mind probes, psionic therapy, or other wildcard possibilities – patients can improve radically after drastic treatment. The therapist must roll vs. Physician (Psychiatric) at -3 or worse. On a success, measure the insanity's remaining recovery time in *weeks* (or *days,* for a really cinematic game) rather than in *months*. Failure means the therapist must wait 1d months to try shock therapy again, but normal therapy is still possible. Critical failure makes the condition permanent!

Cinematic Neurosurgery: In this method, the surgeon *cuts out* the insanity, leaving behind only healthy brain tissue. Doc Savage's TL(6+3) "Crime College" used one example of such "therapy," while another is Stone Age (TL0) trepanning: drilling a hole in the skull to let the demons out. Cinematic neurosurgery is sheerly impossible in the real world before TL9 at least – although a lot of people once believed otherwise. The surgeon rolls vs. Surgery (Brain) at -3. Success cures the insanity instantly but inflicts HP of injury equal to the points in disadvantages cured; the patient then recovers from this physically (p. B424). Failure inflicts injury without a cure; repeated attempts work as for cinematic shock therapy. Critical failure means the patient dies or becomes a permanent vegetable (player's choice).

Home Care: The best care possible is at home or in some similar private and friendly place with few or no other patients competing for the time and attention of a considerate, tender caregiver. The caregiver rolls vs. skill weekly, as with normal therapy – but on a critical success, the patient's recovery time *decreases* by one month in addition to the other benefits. At the GM's discretion, the caregiver might be a therapist with Psychology (Clinical); a doctor or a nurse with Physician (Psychiatric) or Professional Skill (Nurse); a wisewoman or an elf with Herb Lore; a clergyman with Psychology (Applied); and so on. If the GM agrees, the caregiver can even be a loved one – likely a Dependent, but other relationships are possible – in which case the caregiver rolls vs. Will at -2 in the absence of another skill or trait that seems more sensible.

Example: Lady Hindmarch is at home in the Cotswolds under the tender care of her family doctor. He critically succeeds at his Physician (Psychiatric) roll. Lady Hindmarch gains two bonus points – and better yet, she'll now suffer from her Obsession for only *nine* months.

Lobotomization: In 1949, Portuguese neurologist António Egas Moniz received the Nobel Prize for his 1936 invention of the prefrontal lobotomy. This psychosurgery involved drilling holes in the skull and using thin wires to sever the connections between the prefrontal cortex and the rest of the brain. In 1945, American psychiatrist Walter Freeman modified Moniz's technique, using a simple kitchen ice pick and minimal anesthetic to cut costs. The goal was to reduce pain and depression in institutionalized patients; the result was over 65,000 lobotomized victims in the U.S., Britain, and Scandinavia alone until the practice fell out of favor in the 1970s. In game terms, a *successful* lobotomy (roll vs. Surgery) *trades* up to -40 points of mental disadvantages for Slave Mentality; this can never be bought off. An unsuccessful one causes any number of bad effects, from Berserk or Callous, to loss of Talents or IQ, to death.

Tell Me More About These "Vampires"

Should the heroes be so unfortunate as to wind up in the lunatic asylum or the hands of a bureaucratic mental-health system, they may find themselves diagnosed with a mental illness they don't have – or at least, one they don't have an excellent reason for. Diagnoses that horror PCs may face include:

Anarchic Hand Syndrome: "Whose hand, exactly, is it, and how did it get on your arm?"

Antisocial Personality Disorder: "Quit your job . . . no steady relationships . . . involved in illegal activity . . ."

Borderline Personality Disorder: "No, I won't leave you alone at night. Just put down the chair leg."

Capgras Delusion: "The androids have been replacing your friends, have they?"

Compulsive Personality Disorder: "So you always have to wear this *specific* cross, and you can't *ever* look outside after dark."

Ekbom's Syndrome: "I see – alien insects have laid eggs in your blood."

Fregoli Delusion: "So the demon might be anyone at all, living in anyone you meet."

Narcissistic Personality Disorder: "Only you can save us all from the Ancient One."

Paranoid Schizophrenia: "So the vampires can talk to their victims, and make them do things, and they're hunting you."

Psychotic Fugue State: "So tell me why you tried to kill the Hungarian ambassador."

Schizotypal Personality Disorder: "Your magic powers show you which ones are the werewolves?"

Shared Paranoid Disorder (Folie à Deux): "You've all obviously been talking to each other a lot about this."

These rules are for quick-and-dirty cinematic lobotomies; for clean-and-sterile guidelines, see ***GURPS Bio-Tech.***

Snake Pits: Some institutions actively *impede* recovery. Most are merely neglectful, extending the time interval between therapy rolls. However, the worst are overcrowded, grim, rat-infested, or generally appalling, imposing up to -5 on therapy rolls. Before TL6, *all* rolls in institutions are at -5 under even the best of conditions, which practically never obtain. And of course horror games set at any TL are replete with mad psychiatrists using their asylums as cult headquarters, or as experimental laboratories for Brainwashing (p. B182), Mind Control (p. B68), or worse . . .

Psychiatric Drugs

Starting at TL7, drugs can keep many mental illnesses at bay. Treat this as a Mitigator (p. B112) on the relevant disadvantages. Psychiatric drugs typically must be taken daily and are always prescription-only, for a net -55% limitation. Interrupting drug therapy causes the original disadvantages to return in 1d days – and now they're at the next-lower self-control number or next-worse level (as applicable) until treatment resumes!

Drugs potent enough to banish psychiatric problems completely often come with their own side effects. If the therapist makes his prescription roll by 3+, the drug cocktail is perfectly balanced; success by 2 means it comes with -5 points of side-effect disadvantages; and success by 0 or 1 means it causes -10 points of side effects. It isn't unknown for patients to have to take drugs to mitigate the side effects of the drugs they're taking for their condition!

Possible drug side effects include Absent-Mindedness, Addiction, Bad Temper, Confused, Extra Sleep, Impulsiveness, Indecisive, Insomniac, Killjoy, Laziness, Light Sleeper, Low Pain Threshold, Motion Sickness, Overconfidence, Overweight, Paranoia, Short Attention Span, Slow Riser, and Unfit. These disadvantages – like those from the initial malady – lower the sufferer's point value. Unlike the disadvantages being treated, though, side effects need not be bought off with points; they go away "for free" once the patient's condition is cured and he stops taking the drugs.

Psychiatric drugs are LC3. Cost varies widely depending on insurance, generic availability, and specific formulations.

"Snap Out Of It, Man!"

In some horror games, a friend, healer, or alienist can perform a sort of psychological triage, providing on-the-spot therapy to halt insane behavior in its tracks. *Anybody* can try to aid a Fright Check victim; time-honored approaches include brandy, smelling salts, and a slap in the face. In a pulp or Gothic game, such palliatives grant the recipient +2 to his recovery or self-control roll, where applicable.

A professional with Physician (Psychiatric) or Psychology (Clinical) can make a skill roll to provide "mental first aid" to such a victim. Traditionally, this involves a steely gaze and a few words of incisive-yet-manly calm. The attempt takes 30 seconds, although the specialist may decide to accept a penalty for haste (p. B346) in combat or mortal danger. Success lets the victim pull himself together for 1d minutes. During this time, he doesn't suffer from the effects of the initial Fright Check, although he may fail another Fright Check in the interim.

Afterward, the Fright Check results kick in at full strength once again and the "Fright Check clock" restarts, unless the specialist can make *another* successful Physician (Psychiatric) or Psychology (Clinical) roll. Each point of success on this roll reduces the total time spent suffering Fright Check results by 1d minutes.

These rules are *cinematic.* Even in larger-than-life games, they don't mitigate permanent effects or halt physical effects such as seizures and heart attacks.

Power Corrupts

In a horror campaign, the GM may wish to make some or all supernatural powers inherently evil. The *Black Magic* rules in ***GURPS Magic*** provide one way of handling this for magic. Other options include the power tally used by *Threshold-Limited Magic* and the Spiritual Distortion of *Assisting Spirits,* both in ***GURPS Thaumatology,*** and the point-debt model of *Meditative Magic* in ***GURPS Fantasy*** – all of which could be interpreted as buildups of corrupting influences that might eventually lead the mage to develop "evil disadvantages" like Callous and Sadism. These approaches to the Dark Arts share one common feature: they free the practitioner from the immediate energy costs of his Arts but extract a far more severe price from him later on. Think of them as ways to convert some or all of the usual energy cost into a buildup of bad karma, alien taint, the Dark Side, Satanic influence, deformed *p'o,* psychic damage, or what have you. This Corruption – whatever its source – is resolved later on through such game mechanics as Will rolls, Calamity Checks, and conversion to disadvantages.

Any of the above systems could be extended to other sorts of supernatural abilities. Provided that the capability in question costs energy (usually FP) to invoke, adaptation is straightforward. For example, demons might gift a man with a silver tongue – the better to spread their lies. This would work just like Black Magic, but instead of casting spells at reduced energy cost, the "dark preacher" would use Enthrallment skills (p. B191) without their usual FP costs, thereby gaining Corruption. Other potential Dark Arts of this kind include the Imbuement Skills of ***GURPS Power-Ups 1*** and the Energy Accumulating model of Path/Book magic in ***GURPS Thaumatology.***

Some supernatural capabilities *don't* have associated energy costs, though. Examples include many cinematic combat skills (e.g., Invisibility Art and Zen Archery), the Effect Shaping model of Path/Book magic, and almost anything from ***GURPS Powers.*** For cases such as the first two of these, significant skill penalties are often involved, and the GM can allow the Dark Arts to diminish these in lieu of energy costs. Treat each -1 in penalties negated by the use of Dark Arts as a point of Corruption.

A similar principle applies to psionic abilities as described in ***GURPS Psionic Powers:*** treat each +1 to the psionic skill roll as a point of Corruption. For supernatural gifts demarcated in levels – like most psi abilities – one-time access to higher levels is available at a Corruption cost equal to 1/5 of the character-point cost that the user would have to pay for the additional levels, rounded up. For instance, a dark psi with Telekinesis 2 [10] could strangle someone as if he had Telekinesis 10 [50] for a mere 8 points of Corruption.

For the most part, none of these approaches work for the sorts of supernatural abilities that ***GURPS Powers*** describes. Those capabilities rarely cost energy to invoke and don't always require rolls to use – and what rolls they *do* call for are seldom penalized. If you care to dig into the guts of the system, you can relate abilities to energy costs through the *Temporary Enhancements* and *Trading Fatigue for Effect* rules in ***Powers,*** and then model Corruption stemming from use of those abilities using whichever system you like from among those mentioned above. A simpler method is to use the Corrupting limitation (p. 22). Taking the limitation multiple times increases the amount of Corruption that each use of the ability causes.

Many Roads to Hell: A Sample Corruption System

This is a relatively simple yet harsh Corruption system for magical horror campaigns that make corruption, temptation, and the dangers of power a major theme. With minor tweaking, it can represent the loss of sanity in a cosmic horror game. It presents sample answers to many questions that the GM should ask when tailoring a Corruption system to his campaign.

Access to Corrupt Magics

Discovering how to cast Corrupt magics requires research or training in Hidden Lore of some kind, or summoning demons. If the warlock lacks Magery, this process grants it. Some monsters – and all demons – have innately Corrupt magic, but that doesn't matter to them now. Alchemists might be able to create "elixirs of Magery" from the glands and blood of such beings.

Alternatively, make access to Corruption a campaign feature that has no character-point cost. *Anybody* can tap into Corruption when they need extra power!

Gaining Corruption

A Corrupt magus can claim "free" energy points to power any spell at the cost of adding an equal number of points to his Corruption total. The GM may impose a ceiling on these free points equal to six times the caster's Magery level, sending him back to the blasphemous tomes or sulfurous pentacles for more learning. Spells cast using Corrupt energy risk the *Black Critical Table* from ***GURPS Magic.***

If bought at character creation, every 10 points of Corruption is a disadvantage worth -1 character point. Anyone – with or without Magery – can also gain Corruption by any of the following means:

Bad Places: Living in or traveling through a haunted house, a dark realm, or other Bad Place for a month adds 1d-2 Corruption. Some Bad Places add Corruption even faster; e.g., crossing the threshold of a lich's tomb. Engaging in any kind of magical rite (except *possibly* holy prayer or fasting) in a Bad Place adds 1d Corruption.

Blood Money: Profiting from the sale of an evil idol's eye, spending cursed pirate gold, and similar transactions adds a point of Corruption per $1,000 involved. Some horrid wealth is worse yet: Spending one of the shekels Judas gained for betraying Jesus might add 5, 6, or more points of Corruption by itself, above its street value!

Corrupt Wounds: The bites, weapons, or talons of some creatures – demons, wraiths, vampires, and alien horrors especially – carry Corruption. Every point of injury received from such a monstrous opponent adds a point of Corruption.

Derangement: Every -1 in Derangement (p. 142) accrued adds a point of Corruption, as the sufferer beholds Evil's grim glory.

Learning Hidden Lore: Every character point spent to gain Hidden Lore adds a point of Corruption. Some tomes – especially grimoires, or dark books used in Path/Book Magic – might carry Corruption even if they don't teach Hidden Lore directly.

Using Cursed Artifacts: Using a cursed artifact for a mundane purpose adds 1d-2 Corruption. Using it for a ritual function (e.g., in a ceremony) or for an evil reason adds 1d Corruption. Using it to power or cause a supernatural effect adds Corruption equal to the energy points needed to cast the equivalent spell.

Vile Encounters: Eating human flesh or evil sentient fruit, sleeping with succubi, or otherwise mingling your life force with monstrosity costs 1d-2 Corruption *per incident*.

Magic – the darkest magic. My soul swims in it, scattered across time, trapped in the world of formlessness.

– David Lo Pan, in ***Big Trouble in Little China***

These consequences may be common knowledge, revealed in play by NPCs ("Go ye not to the graveyard on St. John's Eve, lest ye be curst by Belial!"), or discovered only on a successful roll against Occultism (or Hidden Lore).

The GM keeps track of each PC's Corruption total in secret, and is encouraged to lie like a demon when asked for a current total: "No, you feel fine. Better than fine! Your moral clarity is unimpaired."

Effects of Corruption

Corruption is visible in the bearer's aura. Saintly, divine, or otherwise anti-Corrupt beings react to Corrupted individuals at -1 per full 25 points of Corruption.

Every week, anyone with even a point of Corruption must roll against Will at -1 per full 10 points of Corruption. Failure converts Corruption to negative character points, at -1 point per full 25 points of Corruption. The GM may use these points to lower self-control rolls for "evil" disadvantages like Sadism or Bloodlust, chip away at "good" disadvantages like Honesty or Pacifism, impose penalties on Reputation or influence rolls with good or pure individuals, lower skills in combat against corrupt entities (half the cost of lowering the skill), impose penalties on Fright Checks or Will rolls to resist possession or similar, add quirks, cause afflictions, or add full-on disadvantages from Lecherousness to a demonic Patron (and associated Duty).

Once someone has 125+ points of Corruption, the GM may convert it into negative character points *regardless* of the Will roll. Then again, the GM might allow the Corruption to build up until one final blowout, even if the player fails his roll!

Converting Corruption points to disadvantage points *does* reduce the subject's running Corruption total, as the foulness reshapes him into a (briefly) more stable condition.

Cleansing Corruption

There are three major ways to cleanse oneself of Corruption:

Meritorious Act: A major virtuous and selfless act (as adjudicated by that person's gods – which is to say, by the GM) cleanses 25 points of Corruption.

Penance: The Corrupt individual must isolate himself from his everyday life and spend every waking moment in prayer or meditation. This requires a daily roll against Meditation. At the GM's discretion, it may also require guidance from a suitable priest, mystic, or guru. While committed to this regime, the penitent cleanses 4 points of Corruption per day. No cleansing is possible on any day when he fails a self-control roll.

If Thy Hand Offend Thee, Cut It Off: Certain tomes speak of a ritual by which all the vileness in a man can be localized in a single body part, such as a hand or an eye. One who performs that ritual (which is up to the GM to create and the PC to hunt down) can swap out Corrupt disadvantage points (or unassigned Corruption total, at the usual 25 points per -1 character point) for points in One Arm, One Eye, One Hand, etc., and then remove the offending body part with a blade. This is a great opportunity for the GM to introduce the severed body part as a monster (see *Independent Body Parts,* p. 15) – or as a villain!

At the GM's discretion, bathing in a holy pool, or drinking from the waters of Lethe, or divine intervention may cleanse some or all Corruption. Less virtuously, one's evil might be painted into a portrait, drained into an emerald, or otherwise shifted – at the very great risk of acquiring a doozy of a bad Destiny (p. B131). Any such cleansing probably requires as much time and effort to arrange as the equivalent penance would, however.

Other Corruptions

Depending on the campaign cosmology, other power sources might be inherently (or potentially) Corrupt. Applying the Corrupting limitation to such a source makes yet another way to rack up the points. The powers of Order, Chaos, and even Heaven might "corrupt" the indiscriminate user, warping him into something more to their taste. Use the negative character points from Corruption to transform him into a Grey, a Thing Man Was Not Meant to Know, one of the Unseelie, or an implacable and inhuman angelic weapon – any of which could be grist for a horror campaign driven more by alienation and isolation than by corruption per se.

Chapter Five

Tales to Terrify

The machine stood out impossibly clear against the sapphire sky of the Caribbean, reflecting blinding glints of bronze in the broiling sun. It was a machine, for all that it looked like a three-legged insect standing there in the bay. Four fathoms, if it was an inch, yet the machine stood higher than the sloop's bowsprit still.

Around it, no clues except a curtain of red seaweed that nobody on board had seen before, not even Paole, who had sailed all the Seven Seas with Dutch and Portingales and the Spaniard. It was Ammi who said it was no machine of Christian men. Maybe the Chinese could build such a clockwork marvel, Ammi said, but not the Germans or the Englanders or the cleverest Italian watchmaker. Paole said he didn't think it looked Chinese to him, and as he'd seen Canton Harbor for himself, all the men listened to him and some even nodded their heads.

It was Captain Rogers, as always, who set it out. "It matters not if it comes from China, or from Davy Jones, or from the Man in the Moon. What matters is if it has gold inside. Away the boat!"

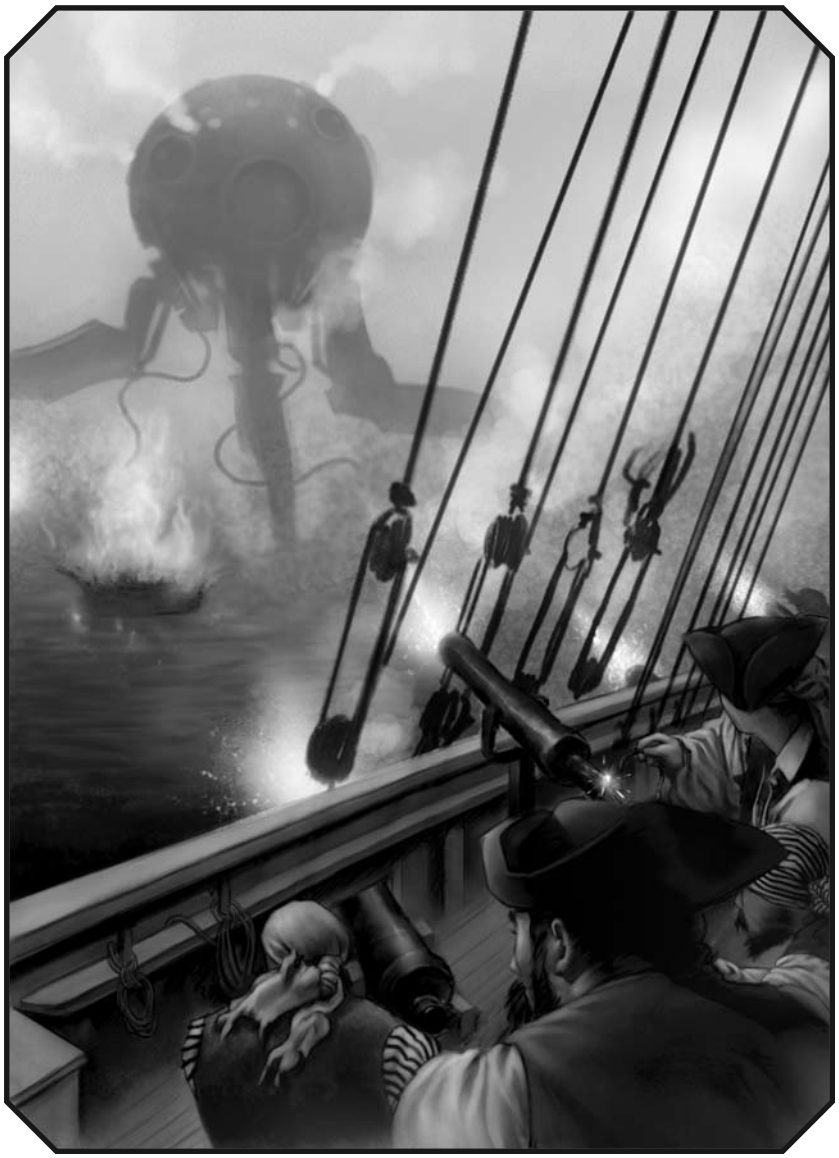
There was a fine scramble for prize crew, and 10 men dropped the longboat from its davit and leaped into it, pulling the oars with a will. Paole wasn't one of them, but Ammi was, and Mr. Matthews, who thought he should be captain, and wasn't above saying it on shore among his cronies. The sloop's conjure looked surly; nobody had asked his opinion. Now that it was decided, he took the other part, saying Elegba had dropped it from the other side of the mirror, and it was bad juju and worse luck.

Captain Rogers ignored him, and kept an eye on the boat through his glass. "They've reached the thing. Make a line fast – good fellows! That's Ammi climbing up on it – he's twisting something. Working the lock, belike, clever German monkey. What is that thing? Is it a bear or a squid, or – God's wounds!"

The Captain dropped his glass and clapped a hand to his face just as the longboat's crew erupted in balls of oily flame. The longboat burned in a twinkling, its planks cracking and exploding with the force of their sudden combustion.

"All hands come about!" Rogers screamed. The conjure murmured something about Oggun and a world of fire and iron. The other men stared in shock or grasped lines in panic.

Rogers roared out his next commands, spinning the wheel in his hand. "Come about, damn you! Full sail! And run out the port guns! Either that thing dies under powder and shot, or we all burn in Oggun's Hell with Matthews!"



Pulling together the advice and concepts discussed so far, here are two sample horror campaign frames in different styles. Each includes a brief analysis in terms of the design parameters established in Chapter 3, character guidelines, potential narrative structures, and suggestions for further variations. Existing ***GURPS*** supplements (some for *Third Edition*) that would help build out these worlds for long-form campaigning are noted at appropriate points. While these frames *are* designed to support extended campaigns, either could host one-shot scenarios with some sacrifice of detail.

Seas of Dread

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

To Europeans in 1674, America is the new world. It's a land of wonder, where any traveler's tale or mariner's legend could be true. Mermen splash in black lagoons, sea serpents surface in weed-choked oceans, and islands appear where none were mapped.

The Americas are also a new world of *opportunity*. The Spanish conquistadors pull galleon-loads of gold out of fallen jungle empires – and brave English and French sailors "go on account," turn pirate, and steal what they can from the Spanish. No man's birth is held against him, as long as he can swing a cutlass and has a purse of doubloons to spend.

And the New World is a world of *horrors* – both ancient and recent. Pirates go mad with bloodlust and commit grotesque atrocities. Buzzard Cult medicine men and Voudun bokors cast nefarious magics. Ghost ships descend upon the unwary from within fog-shrouded mangrove bayous.

The New World is a world still unformed, simultaneously too new to have settled entirely out of Chaos and as old and as fluid as the sea itself. And a powerful entity wants to keep it that way, an enormous undersea beast – perhaps the father of all krakens, or a ghostly monstrosity in kraken form, or both – known to the Jamaican slaves as "Duppy Jonah." (A *duppy* is a ghost or a devil, while Jonah personifies life under the sea; the pirates have corrupted this name to "Davy Jones.") Duppy Jonah has breathed new life into the ancestral terrors of black, white, and red Americans alike, setting American waters aboil with monsters and feeding the dreams of evil men on land. Duppy Jonah seeks to return America to Chaos, and to create a formless magical realm in the Western Hemisphere.

The Campaign

Genre: Piratical swashbuckling. Zombie- or skeleton-crewed ships captained by evil necromancers or revenant pirates prowl the Caribbean in search of blood and magic, and Protestant pirates swear that the Inquisitors in Havana and Maracaibo bind demons to guard the gold in Spanish galleons!

Style: A quintessential pulp-horror game, stocked with any number of horrific monsters and fell cults inspired by Duppy Jonah and its spawn.

Mode: A game of cinematic adventure, full of ropes to swing on, cannons loaded with zombie-killing rock salt, and cutlass-wielding animated skeletons. The backstory makes an excellent stage for Fortean-mode gaming, as anything and everything can be explained by appealing to Duppy Jonah's dreams of Chaos. Pirate campaigns can be irresistible in the camp mode, too.

Other Settings

This campaign draws power from the theme of exploration and the collision between civilization and the wilderness. Duppy Jonah could easily become the Etruscan sea-god Nethuns in a campaign of ancient Greek sailors colonizing the western Mediterranean, or the crone Baba Yaga in a game of medieval settlers in the dark Russian woods. Steampunk explorers of Darkest Africa – or Mars – might also face some primal entity that prefers to keep the maps blank.

The archetypal legend of settlement and violence in modern times is the American Western. The West makes a perfect backdrop for a game in which an ancient American monster (possibly an immensely powerful piasa bird; see pp. 81-82) uses every occult means at its disposal to hamper the railroads, the marshals, and the other trappings of civilization in its trackless wastes and rocky mountains. Only a tiny band of Texas Rangers sees the threat and fights the unknown, riding masked and firing silver bullets . . .

Although it departs from the campaign's central theme of "civilization vs. chaos," the GM who wants to use the *other* half of ***GURPS Swashbucklers*** may wish to run a campaign set in Musketeer-era Paris. In 1572, a French warlock carried Duppy Jonah's egg from the Caribbean back to France, and left it in the lowest level of the Paris catacombs to hatch. By the time of the Musketeers, the spawn of Duppy Jonah have become vampires, werewolves, and other horrors preying on the dark places in the City of Light.

Here then are the stories written on the Book of Blood. Read, if it pleases you, and learn.

They are a map of that dark highway that leads out of life towards unknown destinations.

– Clive Barker, "The Book of Blood"

Theme: The basic theme is struggle – the heroes must defeat the forces of Chaos and build a new civilization in the New World. This is reinforced by the genre's emphasis on physical combat and by the tempestuous weather of the sea.

Design Parameters

Scale: Anywhere from prosaic to epic. The heroes might struggle to rid one small town of an evil Aztec mummy necromancer, or crisscross the Seven Seas battling Duppy Jonah's minions for the fate of continents. A campaign could open with a prosaic first adventure and build to epic levels.

Scope: Initially, pirate heroes will have little scope for action past their cannon muzzles. Knights of the Silver Sword (see below) can pull political strings at higher levels. Adventurers with a seagoing ship could theoretically operate across a global scope.

Visible Scope: The heroes might at first see only local hauntings or monster outbreaks, and imagine America to be a traditional fantasy-style "wilderness" rather than a sphere of Chaos. Knights of the Silver Sword may know of Duppy Jonah, but only learn of the scope of its powers as the campaign progresses.

Austerity: Lenient. Between a pulp style and the anarchic nature of the Caribbean of pirate fiction, adventurers can get away with almost anything, with nothing more than an enemy's curse to discourage them.

Boundaries: Initially restricted to the Caribbean (a quintessential Bad Place), but potentially expandable to the entire Western Hemisphere and the South Seas.

Variations

This campaign could easily become a cosmic horror game, even at cinematic power levels, by making Duppy Jonah an Ancient One or conceivably a Cosmic Deity (see *Things Man Was Not Meant To Know,* pp. 73-76) devoted to roiling chaos and madness – although the tone will likely remain closer to Robert E. Howard than to H.P. Lovecraft. Any campaign that combines razor-sharp rapiers with zombie pirates could potentially be a splatter-style game. By emphasizing Duppy Jonah as a corrupting aberration from the past, the roiling seas and lowering hurricanes at its command, and the likelihood of tainted lineages in isolated plantations on the Jamaican coast, an ambitious GM could run an interesting "pirate Gothic" campaign in this setting. The GM looking for a darker, "noir pirate," corruption-themed campaign could muddy pulp's clear moral stance: one can hardly help but sympathize with Mayan priests and Voudun bokors who unleash the powers of Duppy Jonah upon the overweening white men who slaughter, rape, and enslave their people.

CHARACTERS

The default party consists of 150-point PCs who belong to a cinematic pirate crew. The complement likely includes at least one "ship's conjure" with Ritual Magic and a few college skills; see *Ritual Magic* (p. B242) or, better yet, *Paths and Books* in ***GURPS Thaumatology.*** They slowly discover the truth about the New World, as the maelstrom of Chaos sucks them in. They may be a "free brotherhood" or elect to serve one of the following Patrons:

The Royal Society: Established by King Charles II of England in 1660 to advance the study of natural philosophy. The Royal Society wishes to investigate the wild rumors of magic in the New World, and to obtain specimens of the strange monsters there. In a standard game, it's a small, wealthy group, bought as Patron (Royal Society; 6 or less) [5]. In a "clockpunk" campaign, its technological edge enhances this to Patron (Royal Society; 6 or less; Special Abilities, +100%) [10].

The Order of the Silver Sword: An elite offshoot of the Order of the Golden Fleece, established by the Grail-seeking pirate duke René of Anjou in 1434 to combat evil magic in the lands of the Turk. The Order maintains commanderies in Paris, Vienna, Marseilles, Seville, Ghent, Havana, Panama, and (secretly) London. All knights of the Order have Detect (Magic) *or* (Spirits) [10], True Faith [15], and Visualization [10] – and also Duty (Order of the Golden Fleece; 15 or less) [-15]. Knights should be at least 250-point characters with powerful magical rituals, deadly fencing techniques, and perhaps a smattering of cinematic, supernatural, or exotic advantages. The Order is a powerful organization with magical training; in the Caribbean, treat it as Patron (Order of the Silver Sword; 9 or less) [15]. In a Musketeer game, hunting down vampires in the Paris sewers, this becomes Patron (Order of the Silver Sword; 12 or less) [30].

For a less-piratical game, the PCs could be members of the Lucumi society, a group of good Voudun initiates who wish to unite decent men of all races while protecting blacks and mulattos (see ***GURPS Voodoo***), or Spanish members of Oculus Dei, a recently founded order within the Jesuits attempting to use secret calculating engines to direct society toward reason and freedom (see ***GURPS Steampunk***).

Cinematic Pirate (100 points)

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].
Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].
Advantages: 30 points chosen from among Per +1 to +6 [5/level], Acute Vision [2/level], Ambidexterity [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Perfect Balance [15], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5], or Resistant to Disease [Varies].
Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5], Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5], Enemy (Rival pirate, Spanish governor, etc.) [Varies], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Intolerance (Spaniards) [-5], Jealousy [-10], Odious Personal Habits [Varies], One Eye [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Comrades in arms) [-5], or Social Stigma (Outlaw) [-15].
Primary Skills: Boating (Sailboat *or* Unpowered) (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX [1]-12; Knife (E) DX [1]-12; Saber (A) DX+1 [4]-13; and Seamanship (E) IQ+2 [4]-12.
Secondary Skills: Axe/Mace (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Brawling (E) DX [1]-12; Climbing (A) DX [2]-12; Gunner (Cannon) (E) DX [1]-12; Knot-Tying (E) DX [1]-12; and Navigation (Sea) (A) IQ-1 [1]-9.
Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Caribbean) (E) IQ [1]-10; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-10; Survival (Island/Beach) (A) Per+1 [4]-11; Swimming (E) HT [1]-12; and Thrown Weapon (Knife) (E) DX [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

This template can serve as the basis for a 150-point cinematic pirate PC. In a realistic pirate campaign – or for NPC sailors on Spanish galleons – drop ST and HT a level, and DX *two* levels, to get a 40-point template; also change Saber to Shortsword. Pirate captains should raise Navigation to 12+, add Weather Sense at 12+, and take Leadership and Shiphandling (Ship); Tactics is useful, too.

Uncanny Powers

Magic is secret or scoffed at in the so-called civilized world – but Africans, Native Americans, and savvy pirates know of it and respect or fear it. The "default" campaign assumes Path/Book magic, as seen in ***GURPS Thaumatology,*** but any system will work if the GM knows it well and can keep it creepy and weird. If using mana-based magic, Europe and Europeanized sections of the New World (e.g., Mexico City, Havana, and Boston) have low mana. The rest of the Americas have normal mana, but native-born Europeans need an Unusual Background to possess Magery or any occult, supernatural knowledge. The state of magic in Africa, the Indian Ocean, the China Seas, and the rest of the world "east of Suez" is the GM's call; most likely the organized states such as China, Japan, and Mogul India also have low mana.

In a "clockpunk" game, agents of the Royal Society may use black technology such as repeating air guns, reliable breechloaders, advanced chemicals (gas bombs, truth drugs, etc.), and even TL(4+1) Gatling guns, hang gliders, and submarines!

Psionics and super-powers don't exist.

Here Be Monstres

The most common monsters in this setting will likely be skeletons (p. 155) and zombies (p. 155), at least to start with. French *loups-garou* (see p. 73), Mexican *cihuateteo* (see p. 93), European demons (p. 96), and serpent-folk (p. 84) lurking in the jungle are all "period" creatures worth a look. The GM can introduce *any* monster with a clear conscience, though – the roiling energies of Duppy Jonah have bred and preserved many other fell creatures of wildly varying kinds and natures.

In keeping with this campaign frame's fast pace and pulp roots, these monsters appear in bestiary format rather than as full racial templates. The PCs should be humans, not monsters – the stark and obvious contrast between normal humanity and Chaos is an important part of this setting's theme.

Ape-Man

These hairy, apelike creatures seem somehow created by – and kin to – the enormous forests of the American mainland. Called *ulak* on the coast of Nicaragua and *sokqueatl* in the woods of northern California, the ape-man has long, matted hair (usually reddish or brown), big feet, an uncertain temperament, and an overpowering stench (hence his other nickname, "skunk-ape").

ST: 20	**HP:** 20	**Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12	**Will:** 10	**Move:** 6
IQ: 8	**Per:** 11	**Weight:** 700 lbs.
HT: 12	**FP:** 12	**SM:** +1
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 1

Grapple (12): Followed by *Neck Snap or Wrench Limb* (p. B404). Reach C.
Tree Limb (10): 3d+4 crushing. Reach C, 1.

Traits: Bad Smell; Bestial; Fur; Night Vision 1; Shyness; Temperature Tolerance 2.
Skills: Stealth-15; Two-Handed Axe/Mace-11; Wrestling-12.

Notes: Tree limb is clumsy (-1 to skill), with Parry 0U (apemen *don't* parry).

Byle or Blobb

Also called a "boil," an "ebullition," or simply a "blob," a byle emerges from an area where Duppy Jonah is most powerful, where the powers of Chaos are least constrained. Chaos can form a byle out of anything, but most byles are shapeless, oozing masses of seaweed, swamp slime, Spanish moss, or sea-bottom muck. They can be any size from that of a cat to that of a longboat, and grow by absorbing victims. Byles normally lurk in dank, dimly lit places, waiting for victims to come to them.

A byle can absorb a victim of up to its own weight. It takes three turns to absorb a human-sized victim. To escape, the victim must win a Quick Contest of ST with the byle; use 1/3 of the byle's ST on the first turn, 2/3 of its ST on the second turn, and its *full* ST on the third turn. If friends are trying to help the victim pull free, each helper may add *half* his ST to the victim's for the purpose of this Quick Contest. An absorbed victim takes damage. Armor protects for a number of turns equal to its DR, after which the byle inflicts anywhere from 1 point to 4d crushing damage per turn, depending on its size. Engulfed victims also face suffocation (p. B436).

Byles are Diffuse (p. B380), but burning attacks injure them normally – although the byle's watery mass extinguishes any flame except Greek fire after one turn. Should a byle take any injury from an *explosion,* roll vs. its HT; success means that it fragments into 1d smaller byles, which share the original byle's ST and HP among them equally. Byles never suffer stunning or unconsciousness; at 0 HP, they simply stop moving. A byle is destroyed at -10×HP. Magic affects byles normally.

ST: 5-45	**HP:** 5-45	**Speed:** 6.25
DX: 12	**Will:** 9	**Move:** 4 (Ground)
IQ: 1-5	**Per:** 8	**Weight:** 10-1,200 lbs.
HT: 14	**FP:** 14	**SM:** -3 to +4
Dodge: 0	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 0

Engulfing (12): See text; inflicts 1d crushing per 300 lbs. of weight. Reach C.

Traits: Binding (Engulfing; Only Damaged by Burning); Body of Water (Swimming Move 6); Chameleon 3; Duplication (No Sympathetic Injury; Shared Resources); Regeneration (Fast); Vibration Sense (Water).

Skills: Stealth-13.

Gill-Man

Apparently the originals for the legends of mermen, the gill-men live in shallow, estuarial waters, or in deep rivers such as the Amazon and Orinoco. They're humanoids with repulsive features, gills, and fins on their backs and limbs. They may have unspeakable human ancestry – they remain lasciviously attracted to nubile young humans, especially women.

Gill-men move as easily on land as on water, using their full Move while swimming. They cannot remain out of water for long, however; every 10 minutes, a gill-man must make a HT roll or take 1 HP of dehydration injury. They generally fight with claws, but may use stone knives, spears, or even spear throwers, at the GM's discretion.

ST: 15	**HP:** 15	**Speed:** 6.50
DX: 12	**Will:** 11	**Move:** 6
IQ: 8	**Per:** 10	**Weight:** 250 lbs.
HT: 14	**FP:** 14	**SM:** 0
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** 10 (Unarmed)	**DR:** 2

Claw (14): 1d+1 cutting. Reach C.

Javelin (12): 1d+2 impaling, Acc 3, Range 22/37 (hurled); 2d+2 impaling, Acc 3, Range 30/45 (atlatl).

Traits: Amphibious; Appearance (Hideous); Doesn't Breathe (Gills); Hard of Hearing (Accessibility, Only in Air); Nictitating Membrane 2; Pressure Support 1; Sharp Claws; Subsonic Hearing; Temperature Tolerance 2; Terrain Adaptation (Swamp); Vibration Sense (Water).

Skills: Brawling-14; Spear Thrower-12 *or* Thrown Weapon (Javelin)-12; Stealth-13.

The backward look behind
the assurance
Of recorded history,
the backward half-look
Over the shoulder,
towards the primitive terror.

– T.S. Eliot,
"The Dry Salvages"

Guiafairo

A beast of Senegalese legend given rebirth by the powers of Chaos in America, the guiafairo (the "terror by night") combines membranous bat wings, a thick toad-like body, and the fanged visage of an albino man-ape. It drinks the blood of those it attacks, and sometimes carries children or young women off into the night to feed on at its leisure.

Guiafairo are nocturnal and (fortunately) solitary. They nest in ruined towers, crags, caves, and high dark forest canopies. They swoop down and ambush from above whenever possible. They're known to steal into villages at night, making off with a new victim each evening. Entire villages have been abandoned due to a guiafairo terrorizing the area. They can be found wherever African slaves or maroons live.

ST: 17	**HP:** 17	**Speed:** 6.50
DX: 14	**Will:** 10	**Move:** 5 (Ground)
IQ: 7	**Per:** 10	**Weight:** 150 lbs.
HT: 12	**FP:** 12	**SM:** +1
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 1

Grapple (9): Move and Attack to grapple target weighing up to 116 lbs., made from anywhere within 13 yards, followed by drag into the sky. Reach C.

Vampiric Bite (14): 1d+1 cutting + follow-up 2 HP/second blood drain. Requires a normal grapple first. Reach C.

Traits: Appearance (Monstrous); Brachiator; Discriminatory Smell; Flight (Air Move 13; Winged); Fur; Night Vision 3; Sonar (20 yards); Vampiric Bite.

Skills: Aerobatics-14; Brawling-14; Climbing-15; Lifting-14; Stealth-14; Wrestling-14.

Meyhom

A piratical distortion of the Portuguese for "half-men," the meyhom are another African legend finding new roots in the New World. The Baronga call them *mangabangabana;* the Nyasa, *chiruwi;* the Basuto, *madabile.* By any name, they're fearsome witches with only half a body: one arm, one leg, half a head and torso, and a continuously oozing, bloody side. Male meyhom are "right-handed," female meyhom are "left-handed." They hop or float; their gaze nauseates the beholder, as do their cannibalistic habits. The Nyasa claim that if you can overpower a chiruwi, it will teach you magic; other tribes say that it will blend into your body and possess you forever. In the New World, tribes of meyhom haunt the hills outside major slave ports like Recife, Santos, Kingston, and Havana.

ST: 15	**HP:** 8	**Speed:** 6.50
DX: 12	**Will:** 12	**Move:** 3 (Ground)
IQ: 11	**Per:** 9	**Weight:** 90-120 lbs.
HT: 14	**FP:** 14	**SM:** 0
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** 9	**DR:** 0

Club (12): 2d+2 crushing. Reach 1.

Nauseating Gaze (12): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Malediction 1; Retching; Vision-Based). Once retching expires, victim is nauseated instead of stunned until he makes a HT roll.

Traits: Appearance (Horrific); Dark Vision; Flight (Air Move 6); Lame (Missing Leg); Magery 2; Odious Racial Habit (Eats Humans); One Arm; One Eye; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+8); Super Jump 1 (8-yard jump, 4-yard jump in combat).

Skills: Broadsword-12; Jumping-16.

Notes: Common spells include Blur-13, Deflect Missile-12, Hinder-11, Ignite Fire-13, Lockmaster-11, and Sleep-11.

Octopus, Giant

Lurking in the warm waters of the Americas, these tentacled monsters prey on small craft and lone swimmers. They change colors, hide from sight, and strike from ambush with surprise where possible (p. B393). Their even larger cousins, the krakens, pull down whole galleons.

ST: 16-64	**HP:** 16-64	**Speed:** 6.50
DX: 14	**Will:** 10	**Move:** 9 (Water)
IQ: 4+	**Per:** 11	**Weight:** 100-1,800 lbs.
HT: 12	**FP:** 12	**SM:** 0 to +3
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 1

Grapple (14): Followed by either Constriction Attack (p. B43) or pull toward beak. Reach C, 1 (SM 0 or +1), C-2 (SM +2), or C-3 (SM +3).

Venomous Beak (14): 1d to 7d cutting + follow-up Affliction 4 (HT-3; Extended Duration, 6 hours; Follow-Up, Beak; Melee, Reach C, Cannot Parry; Onset, 5 minutes; Paralysis). Reach C.

Traits: Ambidexterity; Chameleon 3; Colorblindness; Constriction Attack; Deafness; Extra Arms 6 (Extra-Flexible; Long); Extra Attack 1; Flexibility; Injury Tolerance (No Neck); Invertebrate; Night Vision 3; No Legs (Aquatic); Obscure 3 (Inky Cloud); Sensitive Touch; Sharp Beak; Vibration Sense (Water); Weak Arms (1/4 ST); Wild Animal.

Skills: Stealth-14.

Notes: Can attack with two tentacles per turn. A cutting attack can *sever* a tentacle by inflicting injury over HP/4.

Sea Serpent

These gigantic beasts snatch men from foretops and decks, and splinter boats. The largest of them can crush a sloop, even a brig, in its coils. So far, nobody has seen one that can crush a galleon. So far . . .

ST: 25-200+	**HP:** 25-200+	**Speed:** 7.25
DX: 13	**Will:** 10	**Move:** 8 (Water)
IQ: 3	**Per:** 10	**Weight:** 1,000+ lbs.
HT: 16	**FP:** 32	**SM:** +4 to +8 to . . .
Dodge: 10	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 3

Bite (13): 2d+1 impaling or more. Some sea serpents have Strong Venom (p. 16). Reach 1-8.

Grapple (13): Followed by Constriction Attack (p. B43). Reach 1-4.
Snout Bash (13): 3d crushing or more. Reach C.

Traits: Cold-Blooded (50°F); Constriction Attack; Crushing Striker (Snout; Cannot Parry; Limited Arc); Enhanced Move 2 (Water Move 32; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP); Fangs; Pressure Support 2; Vermiform; Vibration Sense (Water); Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-13; Survival (Open Ocean)-14; Wrestling-13.
Notes: A sea serpent can loop its body *over* a target two or more SM levels smaller without needing to evade. It may attack a ship with a snout bash or a slam before grappling it.

Have you tried talking to a corpse? It's boring.
– Jack Goodman, in ***An American Werewolf in London***

Skeleton

Skeletons of those who died unburied in the New World are easily animated by the forces of Chaos or by almost any magician of talent (usually using the Zombie spell, p. B252). In heavily Chaotic areas, skeletons sometimes rise spontaneously – especially where violent blood is spilled. Skeletons use various weapons in combat; those of sailors favor cutlasses, and also retain enough skill at Seamanship to crew a magician's ship.

ST: 9	**HP:** 9	**Speed:** 6.50
DX: 12	**Will:** 8	**Move:** 6
IQ: 8	**Per:** 8	**Weight:** 20+ lbs.
HT: 10	**FP:** N/A	**SM:** 0
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** 9	**DR:** 2

Cutlass (12): 1d-1 cutting *or* 1d-2 impaling. Reach 1.

Traits: Skeletal Undead (p. 27).
Skills: Seamanship-11; Shortsword-12.
Notes: Skeletons suffer ×2 injury from crushing attacks. Skull has only DR 2 total.

Syren

Syrens (or *sirens*) have the body of a human woman from the navel up, that of a bird below. They have wings instead of arms, and taloned feet. Their voices raised in song are beautiful . . . so beautiful that most people who hear them are compelled to come closer. This would be a gross mistake, however – syrens live on rocky coasts, with jutting, sharp boulders lurking just offshore. Entranced sailors who approach invariably wreck on the rocks, whereupon the syrens fly out and feed on their flesh!

Sailors who fail to resist the syrens' song *must* do all they can to move their ship closer to wherever the syrens are singing. This may cause fights aboard ship, and weapons may be drawn – enthralled victims *must* try to get closer. After leaving the spell's area, this compulsion lasts for 10 minutes before fading.

Victims shipwrecked while under the spell have no willpower when attacked by the sirens; they supinely accept death. Shipwrecked mariners who successfully resisted the song may fight back.

The syrens' song, it is said, tells of their journey from Libya to the New World after their defeat by Odysseus.

ST: 12	**HP:** 16	**Speed:** 6.25
DX: 12	**Will:** 16	**Move:** 3 (Ground/Water)
IQ: 9	**Per:** 10	**Weight:** 100 lbs.
HT: 13	**FP:** 13	**SM:** +2
Dodge: 9	**Parry:** N/A	**DR:** 4

Syren Song (16): Mind Control (Area Effect; Bombardment, Skill 16; Hearing-Based).
Talons (10): 1d-1 cutting *or* impaling. Reach C.

Traits: Flight (Air Move 10; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP; Winged); No Fine Manipulators; Odious Racial Habit (Eats Humans); Talons.
Skills: Brawling-12; Singing-16.
Notes: Each syren singing beyond the first gives +1 to effective syren song skill. This doesn't affect resistance – for that, maximum skill is limited to 16 (see *The Rule of 16,* p. B349) – but *does* affect range (p. B550). Area of effect is the radius within which effective skill is 3 or more: 300 yards for one syren, 500 yards for two, etc.

Zombie

Zombies are the most common monsters in the islands. Most are slow undead Voodoo zombies (see *The Zombie,* pp. 90-92), but variations – especially ones with Independent Body Parts (p. 15) – doubtless exist, if only (so far) in the plans of competitive necromancers. Zombies have "muscle memory" skills with the implements they used most in life; this example uses agricultural tools.

ST: 11	**HP:** 16	**Speed:** 4.00
DX: 10	**Will:** 8	**Move:** 3
IQ: 8	**Per:** 8	**Weight:** 125 lbs.
HT: 10	**FP:** N/A	**SM:** 0
Dodge: 7	**Parry:** 8	**DR:** 0

Weapon (10): Mattock (1d+2 impaling) or scythe (2d-1 cutting *or* 1d+1 impaling). Impaling attacks may get stuck (p. B405); scythe becomes unready. Reach 1.

Traits: Undead Voodoo Zombie (p. 92).
Skills: Axe/Mace-10; Two-Handed Axe/Mace-10.
Notes: Given salt's omnipresence in a seagoing campaign, the GM may wish to ignore Voodoo zombies' Vulnerability and Weakness to it, or introduce a stronger zombie (a *zuvembi,* perhaps) that's immune to salt.

Inspirational Material

Bloch, Robert. "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" (1958). Cthulhu Mythos short story set in the modern Caribbean. As well, Donald J. Walsh's "The Rings of the Papaloi" (1971) ties Voudun to the Cthulhu mythos, and the pulp horror stories of Hugh B. Cave are often set in the Caribbean.

Crandall, Reed et al. *Piracy* (EC Comics, 1954-1955). One of EC's "New Direction" comics, now collected in two volumes by Gemstone (1998).

Ellis, Richard. *Monsters of the Sea* (Knopf, 1995). A fascinating combination of real oceanography and marine biology with lurid legends of sea serpents, mermaids, krakens, blobs, and globsters.

Hodgson, William Hope. *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* (Chapman and Hall, 1907). Deadpan nautical horror slowly turns ever more surreal and disturbing; the atmosphere of dread is unequalled.

Masters, Phil. ***GURPS Atlantis*** (Steve Jackson Games, 2001). Much information on Atlantis, undersea life, and similarly useful topics.

O'Sullivan, Steffan. ***GURPS Swashbucklers*** (Steve Jackson Games, 1999).

Powers, Tim. *On Stranger Tides* (Ace, 1987). This rollicking adventure is the seminal pirates-and-Voudun historical-fantasy horror novel.

Rogoziński, Jan. *Pirates!* (Facts on File, 1995). An excellent general reference.

Sabatini, Rafael. *Captain Blood* (McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, 1922). Despite the sanguine title, the piratical protagonist is a perfect pulp hero in this non-horror novel.

Film

Pirates of the Caribbean (Gore Verbinski, 2003). Embraces the genre with both skeletal arms. Two sequels get progressively wider in scope, if less successful as films.

Possible Narrative Structures

Each of these story arcs illustrates one of the narrative structures from pp. 100-101 as it might play out in this campaign world.

The Spanish Prisoners (Escape)

The adventurers start out in the dungeons of the Inquisition, suffering from missing time (p. 8). Breaking out of their cells is comparatively easy, but our amnesiac heroes find that these dungeons seem to go on forever – and that the Inquisition stores Things more dangerous than any prisoners in some of them. From the horrors they fight, fellow prisoners they meet, and scraps of memories they recall, they can piece together the awful truth.

The Eighth Sea (Gauntlet)

According to pirate legend, at sunset on Midsummer's Eve, you can sail over the horizon to a magical ocean full of ghosts and merfolk. The Silver Swords want a team to cross into this legendary ocean, battle any horrors there, chart its currents, and return to our own plane through the Bermuda Triangle with their report.

Back for Seconds (Nemesis)

The cruelest pirate who ever lived, Francois l'Olonnais, was deserted by his men in Nicaragua in 1668, captured by cannibals, sawn to pieces, and eaten. Unfortunately, it didn't take. He returned as a shadow (as pp. 79-80, but with Will+2, Per+1, FP+9, and +10 to ER) and has begun raising (literally) a devil's crew of the worst, most bloodthirsty pirates who ever died violently. He's Duppy Jonah's favored tool for sweeping the seas clean of settlements – and he has a grudge against one of the heroes.

The Black Cormorant (Picaresque)

The adventurers (along with some extras and thugs) crew the *Black Cormorant,* a trim, 100-ton sloop owned by Sir Henry Morgan, the former pirate who now serves as Governor of Jamaica. Morgan knows that something is going on – he may even be a Knight of the Silver Sword – and wants the heroes to take the *Black Cormorant* everywhere they hear of monsters and magic. He pays well for knowledge, and better for trophies, and his trusty crew can keep any doubloons they happen to find.

Heart of Emerald (Quest)

The Portuguese governor of a remote province of Brazil, deep in the jungle, has gone mad. The heroes must ascend the dinosaur- and byle-haunted Amazon in search of Governor Curtés, who has become the god-king of the gill-men of El Dorado.

And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.
– Edgar Allan Poe, "The Conqueror Worm"

Blood in the Craters

They did not eat, much less digest. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and ***injected*** *it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal . . .*

– H.G. Wells, ***The War of the Worlds***

Doomed by its steady cooling, Mars wheels dry and nearly dead 140 million miles from the Sun. As the red planet swung past its blue neighbor, the Martians planned a desperate strike, an invasion across space to extend their species' unnatural life. The Martians channeled their civilization's entire output over a period of decades into the effort, and launched themselves across the interplanetary void in 1897. They landed in their mighty cylinder-craft, and their immense war machines easily battered aside the primitive human defenses. The greatest city of Earth, London, lay smashed and desolate after barely 15 days of war, and the Martians were poised to begin seeding their new home with life in their own unearthly image. Unfortunately, even advanced Martian bioscience had not counted on the profusion of Earthly microbes – some virus laid the invasion low and left humanity in possession of the wet, warm planet Earth, vigilant against renewed attack.

But no plague kills *everybody.* The variations of epidemiology guaranteed that some Martians – primarily the biological-warfare specialists, as it turned out – survived. These survivors, cut off from the home world, must now work in secret. They hide in the rubble of London, study the recalcitrant Earth for its weaknesses, and use technology salvaged from the wreckage of their invasion to build a new army here on Earth. As Britain – and mankind – rebuilds from the disaster and adapts Martian mechanisms to human steam and electricity, they look up into the unfriendly skies. Meanwhile, the horror from the red planet festers and roils beneath their feet.

The Campaign

Genre: Science fiction, specifically steampunk. The Martian invasion brought new technologies and new biologies to Earth – and both present dangers, horrors, and opportunities.

Style: The Wellsian emphasis on realism, and the monstrous habits of the Martians and their creations, present great opportunities for splatter-style horror. Red blood, bloated Martian tissue, and the claustrophobic feel of an urban-ruin campaign setting also work toward grim, gritty gore.

Mode: Investigative. The heroes must slowly penetrate to the heart of the wrecked zone, and the heart of the Martian covert presence, to defeat the horrors. The Martians are highly intelligent villains who will use subterfuge, misdirection, and similar tactics to avoid discovery and defeat. Elements of the wainscot mode may also appear – especially if the GM initially presents the campaign to the players as a more traditional steampunk-adventure game with the failed Martian invasion as the McGuffin delivering steampunk technology.

Theme: Corruption and doom intertwine. The invaders attempted to flee a doomed Mars by corrupting (and inevitably dooming) the Earth. The invasion itself failed, but the survivors continue to taint and corrode the Earth. The events of the Martian invasion combine the futile, forlorn resistance of the human military with the fate that befell the plague-stricken invaders. In the aftermath of this twin doom, corruption breeds in ruined London and in the laboratories where unscrupulous scientists are adapting the Martians' soulless technologies for human war. The wrecked landers and devastated city evoke doom, as the stench of plague and carrion evoke corruption.

Reality Tripod, 1900

In the Infinite Worlds campaign (p. B523), this setting is Reality Tripod, a strange "myth parallel" discovered only three years ago, after Infinity mapped a series of mysterious parachronic "eruptions" from its point in the quantum. Did the Martians launch simultaneous invasions across the Infinite Worlds?

Current Affairs

The British Empire slowly rebuilds after a devastating invasion from Mars, hurriedly adapting the invaders' technology to retain its global position.

Divergence Point

Either 1897 and the Martian invasion, or 3.8 to 4.1 billion years ago, when the Hellas Impact left Homeline's Mars a desert but drove Tripod's proto-Martians up onto land.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Orthodox (empire), Japanese (empire).

Great Powers

British Empire (oligarchy, CR3, CR4-5 in colonies), German Empire (dictatorship, CR4), United States (representative democracy, CR3, CR5 for blacks), France (representative democracy, CR3), Russian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Japanese Empire (oligarchy, CR4), *Martian underground (hive entity, CR6).*

Worldline Data

TL: (5+1) to (6+3)
Quantum: 6
Centrum Zone: Orange
Mana Level: low
Infinity Class: Z3

The fleeting sight of inhuman beings scuttling through the wreckage, or a glimpse of red Martian weed growing in the sewer, can further hint at the corruption festering beneath a recovering England.

> *Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of its appearance.*
>
> *– H.G. Wells,*
> ***The War of the Worlds***

Design Parameters

Scale: Anywhere from prosaic to epic, from rebuilding a single block in London to defending the realm against a renewed invasion.

Scope: Scope can likewise vary widely, from a desperate fight in the rubble of the Tower of London to coordinating military strikes against secret Martian outposts beneath Loch Ness. Much of this depends on the party: Are they elite units of His Majesty's Army, bluff detectives from the Special Branch or New Scotland Yard, or just gentlemen of leisure means and iron conscience?

Visible Scope: This, too, can vary, depending on the boundaries. The "stealth" version of this campaign – which begins as a "standard" ***GURPS Steampunk*** game – will likely expand its scope steadily from London to the inner solar system. Depending on the GM's intentions and abilities, such expansion may surprise the players or merely their characters.

Austerity: Unless the action is set in the chaos immediately following the invasion, this campaign will likely feature at least a moderate level of austerity. Civilized order is, after all, what humanity defends against Martian chaos and poison.

Boundaries: At least initially, the ruins of London and the south of England – but possibly expanding to Mars or Venus, if the investigators seek to root out evil at its source.

Variations

With greater emphasis on (and less ambivalence about) reverse-engineered Martian technology, this frame can easily support cliffhanging pulp adventure instead of grim splatter horror. Widening the scope from London to the rest of the world – or even to the surface of Mars – can psychologically "open up" the campaign's feel, as the players subconsciously flex their adventuring muscles against a variety of settings.

Alternatively, the GM can widen the scope but keep a taut, uncertain, claustrophobia by turning the campaign into conspiratorial horror. Assume that either the Martian ghouls or the Martians themselves can take human form, lurking unseen in humanity's midst and slowly leveraging access to, and understanding of, Martian technology into scientific and political power and influence. This conspiratorial version might begin to resemble the "covert invasion" campaign in ***GURPS Atomic Horror,*** riffing off themes from 1950s paranoia such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.*

Rather than expanding the covert invasion, the GM can present an expanded overt war, in which the Martians wrecked the entire civilized world rather than dying en masse in the first month of the conquest. All of Europe, America, and Asia might lie in ruins, with the game now drawing on post-holocaust horror (p. 119) – complete with mutated Martian life forms, poisonous rubble, and desperate cannibal survivors.

Characters

The standard adventuring party in this campaign can start as 150-point heroes with any mix of skills and backgrounds present in post-invasion, early 1900s London. Initially at least, scientists, academics, and detectives constitute the most likely delvers into the horror in the ruins.

Uncanny Powers

As befits its science-fiction background, this campaign frame has little supernatural content. The Martians have access to advanced technology (see *Red Technology,* p. 159), though – especially biotechnology, not all of which remains under their control. Human scientists (and governments) have experimented with the Martians' germ plasm. In a more cinematic game, these experiments might produce sera that grant super-abilities; if so, the GM should concentrate on the advantages presented in ***GURPS Bio-Tech,*** unless he *wants* a four-color game of steampunk articulated battlesuits, Martian invulnerability rays, and antigravity belts. The heroes might also gain super-abilities as "fallout" from exploding Martian craft, or from weird hybrid germs that bred in the Martians' corpses. In either case, the GM should emphasize the horrific nature of such capabilities; see *Other Abilities* (pp. 112-113). Given that Martians are telepathic, psionic powers may also exist in humanity.

Martian Monsters

The Martians and their unwholesome creations are examples of the monsters and fears discussed in Chapter 2, specifically tuned for this campaign frame. The Martians themselves combine vampires with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know; the Martian ghouls are both ghouls and potential Unseelie or zombies; the marauds are this setting's "werewolves," while psychic silhouettes are its "ghosts"; and the myrmidons combine the fear of the unnatural with a fear of nature to create something creepy, in the Wellsian tradition. Other monsters can appear through these lenses: Martian psionics can no doubt implant serial-killing impulses in an unsuspecting human victim, and Martian biotechnology is surely up to the task of creating cryptids or rippers.

Martians

159 points

The quasi-octopoid Martians are the result of billennia of evolution on their steadily dying world. A Martian is approximately bear-sized, with most of its mass in its bulbous head (which also contains its heart and lungs).

The back of its head is a large tympanic membrane; on the front are two large, red eyes over a fleshy beak surmounting a lipless, V-shaped mouth. Above and below the mouth emerge two bunches of eight tentacles each. Martians are black, brown, or gray in color, although they appear more reddish in bright light or shortly after feeding.

The Martian digestive system has evolved out of existence; Martians now live directly on the blood of higher animals. They can drain blood through their upper tentacles, or use syringes and pipettes to inject it. While feeding (or dying), Martians emit a sonorous hooting or howling sound, which might at one time have been their form of speech. They now communicate exclusively through telepathy. Individual Martians may possess other psionic abilities.

Earth's gravity (1G) is three G-Increments higher than Mars' (0.38G), meaning that Martians suffer -3 to DX and -1 to HT on Earth (see *Different Gravity,* p. B350). Thus, most use bionic limbs, exoskeletons, or (especially) robot vehicles. Martians in this campaign frame don't receive the High TL advantage because they're cut off from their home planet and must make do with salvaged invasion equipment and bootstrapped Earth technology.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-4 [-40]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+3 [60].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10]; FP+10 [30].
Advantages: Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 3 (Partial, Torso/Face Only, -10%) [14]; Extra Arms 6 (Extra-Flexible, +50%; Weak, 1/2 ST, -25%) [75]; Extra Legs (Eight Legs; Cannot Kick, -50%) [8]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Improved G-Tolerance (0.5G; Accessibility, Only affects IQ penalties, -50%) [5]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck, No Vitals) [10]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Telesend (Racial, -20%; Telepathic, -10%) [21]; Temperature Tolerance 4 [4]; Vampiric Bite [30].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; Low Empathy [-20]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Restricted Diet (Blood) [-10]; Susceptible to Disease 3 [-12]; Weakness (Earth's bright sunlight; 1d/minute; Fatigue Only, -50%) [-30].
Features: Blue and violet appear black; Native gravity 0.38 G; Native pressure 200 millibars; Native temperature 40°F; Sexless.

Martian Ghouls

-45 points

The Martians built these humanoids to scavenge the ruins of London (and, increasingly, the alleys and underworlds of England's other cities) more effectively, and to obtain more blood for them. Martian ghouls not only crave human blood for themselves, but can fill their stomachs with excess blood and bring it back to their Martian masters, like hunting beasts returning with prey. An early effort, the ghouls' hideous, pallid countenance makes using them as covert spies or couriers difficult without disguise (which usually requires human assistance), but this is sometimes worth the risk. The Martians may be improving the template for specialized tasks or environments.

Red Technology

Martian technology is approximately TL9, with human reverse-engineered Martian tech effectively TL(6+1) through TL(6+3), since the Martians invaded Britain in early TL6. The primary Martian weapon is the heat ray, which burns targets with no visible flame. The Martians assaulted the Earth with a deadly black smoke, which seemed to be some sort of chemical weapon that killed humans across many square miles with one burst.

At present, the Martians have some of their surviving technology in working order, especially the germ-plasm matrices where they created the black smoke and the red weed that was to overrun Earth's surface. The surviving Martians are currently reengineering their own native life (particularly the red weed, which serves as a vampiric combination of kudzu and strangler vine), and corrupting and altering Earthly species to serve their vile ends. In general, the hidden Martians can accomplish any of the TL9 biotechnological tasks described in ***GURPS Bio-Tech.***

Martian Technology

BEAM WEAPONS (PROJECTOR) (DX-4, or other Beam Weapons-4)

Weapon	*Damage*	*Acc*	*Range*	*Weight*	*RoF*	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*
Heat Ray	4d burn	3	30/90	3.3/2C	1	56(3)	6	-2	1
Heat Ray, Assault	5d burn	6	50/150	5.6/2C	1	28(3)	5†	-3	1

DRIVING (MECHA)

Vehicle	*ST/HP*	*Hnd/SR*	*HT*	*Move*	*LWt.*	*Load*	*SM*	*Occ.*	*DR*	*Range*	*Locations*
Tripod Walker	129	-2/3	11	3/30	19	2	+5	3SPV	250	–	3L

Martian tripods have DR 100 on the legs. The SM is while fully extended; with legs retracted, SM is +2. The Occ. assumes Martians; a modified tripod can hold five humans.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; IQ-2 [-40].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10].
Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Claws (Talons) [8]; DR 3 [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Silence 2 [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unfazeable [15]; Vampiric Bite [30].
Disadvantages: Albinism (p. B165) [-10]; Appearance (Hideous) [-16]; Automaton [-85]; Bowlegged [-1]; Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Blood) [-15]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].
Racial Skills: Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-11.
Features: Can store up to 10 HP worth of "extra" blood in second stomach; this *never* heals own HP; Night Vision 5 (p. 17).

Marauds

16 points

The Martians employ these "uplifted" terrestrial predators as more effective killing machines – and as experimental subjects to learn more about Earth's fertile, multifarious ecology. The Martians have trouble keeping the marauds under control, possibly due to the tendency of the beast flesh to rebel against the brain grafts and other techniques the Martians use to impose their will. Such rogue marauds who've bought off Slave Mentality and Reprogrammable would make excellent PCs in a monsters-as-characters game (p. 11). This template describes an uplifted wolf maraud.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 [40]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+4 [20].
Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Claws (Blunt) [3]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Emotion Sense, +50%) [23]; DR 1 [5]; Enhanced Dodge 2 [30]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 12) [20]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1]; Ultrahearing [5].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bad Grip 1 [-5]; Colorblindness [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Innumerate [-5]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Stress Atavism (15) (Moderate) [-7]; Stuttering [-10]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].
Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-12; Running (A) HT+1 [4]-13; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Myrmidons

80 points

In their continuing efforts to design truly effective and loyal servitors, the Martians soon fastened upon Earthly ants. Ants combine Martian tirelessness with an easily directed hive mentality. By slightly expanding and strengthening the ant genome, the Martians created humaniform hive entities to serve as invisible spies or formidable fighters.

Myrmidons are capable of chemical communication, and attack by squirting a jet of formic acid. To date, the practical ceiling on myrmidon size appears to be about 5,000 thumb-sized ants, or about one human mass – but the Martians keep experimenting on bigger swarms . . . and bigger insects.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-5 [-50]; DX+2 [40]; IQ-5 [-100]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+5 [10]; Basic Speed-1 [-20].
Advantages: 360° Vision [25]; Clinging [20]; Corrosion Attack 1d-2 (Accessibility, Humanoid form only, -10%; Cyclic, 1 second, 10 cycles, +900%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range, ×1/10, -30%) [39]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Indomitable [15]; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse; Body of Swarm, Ants, +40%; Humanoid Form, +50%; Scatter, +40%) [230]; Unfazeable [15]; Universal Digestion [5]; Vibration Sense (Air) [10].
Disadvantages: Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Automaton [-85]; Bad Grip 2 [-10]; Colorblindness [-10]; Deafness [-20]; Mute [-25]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Psychic Silhouettes

81 points

As the Martians enhanced their biological powers, they also worked to maintain their *psychic* advantages. Those with telepathic attacks soon discovered that they could create "psychic silhouettes" by killing humans who were in the grip of powerful emotions. The emotional energies would project the unfortunate victim's form into the place where he died, with abilities related to his final emotion. People killed in the throes of fear created terrifying silhouettes, individuals filled with rage created silhouettes capable of emitting deadly howls, those blasted while experiencing overwhelming lust could inspire it in the living, and so forth. Subject to Martian psychic control, silhouettes can guard a location or distract an opponent.

Psychic silhouettes use a variation on the Ghost template (p. 78):

Psychic Silhouette: Phantasm (p. 79) [126]; add Cannot Learn [-30] and *one* of Crushing Attack 3d (Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Costs Fatigue, 3 FP, -15%; Environmental, Air, -5%; Side Effect, Deafness, +70%) [30], Mind Control (Extended Duration, 10×, +40%; One Emotion Only, -80%) [30], *or* Terror (Appearance) [30]; remove Dread (Exorcism),

Immunity to Mind Control, Telekinesis, and perk "Can hear own name being spoken anywhere"; change Cannot Speak (Substantial Only, -10%) to Cannot Speak, and Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Usually On, +5%) to Invisibility (Machines Only, -50%); and make Energy Reserve psionic. *81 points.*

Possible Narrative Structures

Each of these story arcs illustrates one of the narrative structures from pp. 100-101 as it might play out in this campaign world.

Lambeth Run (Escape)

In this potential introductory arc, a mixed party of marauds and altered humans escapes from the Martians' experimental warrens beneath the ruins of Waterloo Station in south London. They must make peaceful contact with human authorities while staying alive and one jump ahead of the Martians. The PCs may be the escapees, or they might be patrolling human soldiers and police who must decide whether to trust these inhuman entities – and whether to engineer another mass breakout.

Down in the Tube Station at Midnight (Gauntlet)

The heroes are passengers on the first run of the new armored London Underground carriages from the rebuilt port at Greenwich to the railhead in Kensington. Hundreds of workers have died reopening the Underground and laying repaired tracks. It's up to the travelers to find out why, and to survive the discovery.

Wacht am Himmel (Nemesis)

After America and the Empire, Germany has sent the most aid to rebuild and restore Britain. The Kaiser is, after all, related to the Royal Family. However, suspicious folk murmur that the Germans have sent far more engineers, military men, and scientists than tons of food or loans of gold. Could the Sterne Gesellschaft – a German "astronomical society" – be part of some sinister plot to steal Martian technology for the German war machine? Or might their real agenda be something darker yet?

The Thames That Try Men's Souls (Picaresque)

The heroes man (or spend considerable time assisting) the River Patrol, which helps guard grain shipments, transport rebuilding teams, investigate peculiar murders along the Embankment, and show visiting biologists the bizarre growths infesting the wreckage of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

The Other Red Meat (Quest)

In all the turmoil, nobody paid much attention to the *other* attempted vampiric invasion of London in 1897. A correspondent of the missing Dr. Abraham Van Helsing convinces the heroes to find out what happened to Van Helsing during the attack, and whether the vampire that he hunted escaped to Transylvania alive. As they follow the trail from Carfax to Castle Dracula, the investigators can also explore the potential Martian heritage of Earth's first vampires.

Inspirational Material

Cambias, James L. ***GURPS Mars*** (Steve Jackson Games, 2002).

Carella, C.J. ***GURPS War Against the Chtorr*** (Steve Jackson Games, 1993). Sourcebook adapting David Gerrold's war of the worlds, focusing on ecological catastrophes.

Edginton, Ian. *Scarlet Traces* (Dark Horse Comics, 2003). Graphic novel (illustrated by D'Israeli) of post-invasion London; terrific steampunk noir.

Jeter, K.W. *Morlock Night* (DAW, 1979). Other Wellsian horrors in another steampunk London.

Moore, C.L. "Shambleau" (1933). A different take on a different vampire on a different Mars; still well worth reading.

Rowland, Marcus L. ***Forgotten Futures*** (Heliograph, 1999). Billed as "The Scientific Romance Role Playing Game," this game and its worldbooks rigorously (and wonderfully) explore the consequences – stated and implicit – of various works of Victorian and Edwardian SF.

Smith, Clark Ashton. "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" (1932). A brilliant tale of vampiric horrors set on a luridly dying Mars.

Wells, H.G. *The War of the Worlds* (Indiana University Press, 1993). The critical edition of Wells' classic 1898 novel. Elements of this campaign frame also owe a debt to his 1896 novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and his 1905 short story "The Empire of the Ants."

Film

Five Million Years to Earth (Roy Ward Baker, 1967). Ancient malevolent Martian life, the stern science of Professor Quatermass, and modern London intersect in this incredible, vastly underrated film.

Television

War of the Worlds (Greg Strangis, 1988-1990). An enjoyable, albeit less-than-rigorous, TV series "sequel" to the 1953 movie; centered on covert Martian plots.

Blasphemous Lore

Even more than most bibliographies, this one can only scratch the surface of the available material. Thus, any selection – mine emphatically included – becomes a reflection of personal taste. I have made some effort to include undisputed classics in all media, but have fallen back, in the final analysis, on what scares *me*. That said, check out the nonfiction works below, and look in *their* bibliographies and filmographies, for more directions.

Titles of works are given in the format most familiar to English speakers, to make finding them easier. In the case of manga or anime, this is usually (but not always) an English-language title. In the case of Japanese film, this is usually (but not always) a transliterated Japanese title.

> *I couldn't live a week without a private library.*
>
> *– H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Woodburn Harris, 2/25/29*

Bibliography

Horror and books just seem to go together somehow, from the *Necronomicon* to *Vampirella*. Never underestimate the allure of cold, dead print . . .

Nonfiction

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Briggs, Katharine Mary. *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (Pantheon, 1976). An excellent starting place for putting the "Un" into "Unseelie."

Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror* (Routledge, 1990). A formal, academic study of the aesthetics of horror.

Coleman, Loren and Clark, Jerome. *Cryptozoology A to Z* (Simon & Schuster, 1999). A handy first guide to cryptids.

Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil, and Ruin* (Fourth Estate, 1998). The subtitle says it all.

Davis, Wade. *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (Simon & Schuster, 1985). Ethnobotanical investigation into Haitian zombies, with much interesting information on Voudun as well.

Douglas, Adam. *The Beast Within* (Chapmans, 1992). A vital and intriguing exploration of the werewolf myth.

Fort, Charles. *The Book of the Damned* (Boni and Liveright, 1919). Possible, probable, and highly unlikely nonfiction. Collected with its three sequels in *The Books of Charles Fort* (Henry Holt, 1941). These vastly readable books make excellent weirdness mines. The great collector of frogs-from-the-sky stories, Fort raises important questions about the way we dictate "reality."

Garrett, Laurie. *The Coming Plague* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). The scary truth about diseases such as AIDS, Ebola, and their ilk.

Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (Facts on File, 1992). A decent reference.

Hardy, Phil (editor). *The Overlook Film Encyclopedia: Horror* (Overlook, 1994). The cinephile's reference work on horror, with entries on over 2,000 films.

Harms, Daniel. *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia* (Elder Signs Press, 2008). A complete overview of Lovecraft's cosmic horrors, and those of his emulators.

Jones, Stephen and Newman, Kim (editors). *Horror: The 100 Best Books* (Carroll & Graf, 1988) and *Horror: Another 100 Best Books* (Running Press, 2005). A hundred horror writers and critics each pick a book; browser's paradises.

Joshi, S.T. and Dziemianowicz, Stefan (editors). *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia* (Greenwood, 2005). Now the standard reference work. Joshi's *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life* (Necronomicon Press, 1996) is the standard biography.

Kendrick, Walter M. *The Thrill of Fear* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1991). A history of horror entertainment since the Gothic novel.

King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre* (Everest House, 1981). King's addictively readable nonfiction examination of four decades of horror books and movies.

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Schechter, Harold. *The Serial Killer Files* (Ballantine, 2003). Deftly combining ghoulishness and scholarship, this is probably the best current one-stop reference work.

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Stanley, John. *Creature Features* (Berkley Boulevard, 2000). Subtitled "The science fiction, fantasy, and horror movie guide," it has close to 4,000 entries! Stanley, who used to host a Bay Area late-night movie show, provides useful critiques of all the films. No horror buff's library should be without it.

Taylor, Troy. *Ghost Hunter's Guidebook* (Whitechapel Productions, 2007). Updated edition of the best book on the topic.

Fiction

There's so much good horror fiction out there that any list must perforce be arbitrary. The problem metastasizes further when one considers that even mediocre horror fiction often makes a great model for horror gaming – if only by spawning ideas of the "Well, if *I* were writing this . . ." variety. That said, the material below is for the most part good stuff, somewhat culled for gameability or game inspiration. Of course, some of it is there simply because it will scare you out of a year's growth.

Barker, Clive. *Books of Blood* (Sphere Books, 1984). Six aptly named short-story anthologies established Barker as a first-rank horrorist. His *The Damnation Game* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985) and *Cabal* (Poseidon, 1988) explore increasingly secret horrors. With *The Great and Secret Show* (Collins, 1989) and *Imajica* (HarperCollins, 1991), he moves further into dark fantasy and romance. Everything Barker writes is worth reading.

Barron, Laird. *The Imago Sequence and Other Stories* (Night Shade Books, 2007). Superb recapitulation of the horror tradition; a contemporary classic.

Bear, Greg. *Blood Music* (Arbor House, 1985). Intelligent viruses transform living things from within; *non*-supernatural horror at its most terrifying.

Bellairs, John. *The House With a Clock in Its Walls* (Dial, 1973), *The Mummy, the Will, and the Crypt* (Dial, 1983), *The Spell of the Sorcerer's Skull* (Dial, 1984), *The Dark Secret of Weatherend* (Dial, 1984), and many more are excellent sources for kid-character roleplaying, as well as being great "juvenile" horror novels.

Bierce, Ambrose. *Can Such Things Be?* (Cassell, 1893). Bleak, savagely ironic short horror fiction.

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Brooks, Max. *World War Z* (Crown, 2006). Thriller-style "oral history" of the zombie apocalypse and what comes after.

Campbell, Ramsey. *The Darkest Part of the Woods* (Tor, 2003). Masterpiece of mood combining psychological and cosmic horror. Campbell has written many other excellent horror novels, and his short-story collection *Alone with the Horrors* (Arkham House, 1993) is definitive. His Cthulhu Mythos stories have a grimy, urban feel to them; they are collected in *Cold Print* (Tor, 1987).

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Collins, Nancy A. *Sunglasses After Dark* (Onyx/NAL, 1989). Postmodern vampires and other horrors haunt a surreal night world tailor-made for roleplaying.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House* of Leaves (Pantheon, 2000). Postmodern constructed-reality novel disguised as haunted house, or vice versa.

Dean, Pamela. *Tam Lin* (Tor, 1991). Excellent atmospheric horror-fantasy novel set on a small college campus in the 1970s, and centering on ghosts, faerie, and the power of the stage.

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Gran, Sara. *Come Closer* (Soho, 2003). A novel of unease, suspense, and (maybe) possession.

> *But if I find that I cannot terrify, I will try to horrify, and if I find that I cannot horrify, I'll go for the gross-out.*
>
> *– Stephen King,*
> ***Danse Macabre***

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Hill, Joe. *Heart-Shaped Box* (William Morrow, 2007). Aging rocker, meet haunted suit; a swell contemporary ghost story.

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Howard, Robert E. *The Horror Stories of Robert E. Howard* (Del Rey, 2008). Though best known for fantasy, Howard wrote stirring horror tales during his brief career (1925-1936). *Nameless Cults* (Chaosium, 2001) collects Howard's Cthulhu Mythos stories, among them the terrific novel *Skull-Face* (*Weird Tales* serial, 1929).

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Laidlaw, Marc. *The 37th Mandala* (St. Martin's, 1996). A New Age charlatan accidentally unleashes Things Man Was Not Meant To Know as "spirit guides."

Langan, Sarah. *The Missing* (HarperCollins, 2007). Small-town virus outbreak drives apocalyptic horror.

Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *In a Glass Darkly* (Richard Bentley, 1872). Anthology containing the novelette "Carmilla," the first great erotic vampire story, and many other minor masterpieces. *Carmilla and 12 Other Classic Tales of Mystery* (Penguin, 1996) is an excellent modern collection of Le Fanu.

Lebbon, Tim. *As the Sun Goes Down* (Night Shade Books, 2000). Short story collection by a new British talent.

Lee, Tanith. *Red as Blood* (DAW, 1983). This beautifully perverse collection of short stories takes Grimm's classic fairy tales and turns them into atmospheric and grisly tales of fantasy and horror. A perfect example of how to make the familiar horrific.

Leiber, Fritz. *Conjure Wife* (Twayne, 1953). A haunting novel of secret witchcraft in a 1950s university. *Our Lady of Darkness* (Berkley, 1977) is a luminous, literary urban horror fantasy (a genre Leiber invented in 1941 with the short story "Smoke Ghost").

Ligotti, Thomas. *The Nightmare Factory* (Carroll & Graf, 1996). Assembles Ligotti's three main collections into an omnibus. Ligotti is the premier writer of short horror alive today. Madness, puppets, and more.

Lindholm, Megan. *Wizard of the Pigeons* (Ace, 1986). Truly superb urban fantasy featuring supernatural menace among the street people of Seattle. A fine example of how magic can be all around us, yet unnoticed except by those who choose to look for it.

Lovecraft, H.P. *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories* (Penguin, 1999), *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories* (Penguin, 2001), and *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories* (Penguin, 2004). These three omnibus volumes contain the corrected, original texts of Lovecraft's fiction (first published in the pulps between 1924 and 1941). Lovecraft is the greatest American horror author since Poe, in terms of vision, literary skill, and influence.

Maberry, Jonathan. *Patient Zero* (St. Martin's, 2009). Technothriller pits action hero against zombie menace. Pure, delirious pulp-horror sequel *The Dragon Factory* (St. Martin's, 2010) features genemod monsters and bioterror.

Machen, Arthur. *The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light* (John Lane, 1894). The linked story collection introducing Machen's "hidden race" Unseelie. The standard collection of Machen's best work is *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural* (Knopf, 1948). Chaosium publishes corrected, complete versions of the linked stories (2000-2005).

Matheson, Richard. *Hell House* (Viking, 1971). One of the best haunted-house stories ever penned. Matheson's short stories are also reliable shockers, and his novel *I Am Legend* (Fawcett, 1954) combines a great "scientific vampire" with post-apocalyptic psychological horror.

McCammon, Robert R. *They Thirst* (Avon, 1981). A vampiric apocalypse. *Usher's Passing* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984) is a Southern Gothic family drama sequel to Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher." *The Wolf's Hour* (Pocket, 1989) is WWII werewolf action. All are compulsive page-turners.

Newman, Kim. *Anno Dracula* (Simon & Schuster, 1992). Alternate-historical horror in a world where Dracula won. The sequel *The Bloody Red Baron* (Carroll & Graf, 1995) is WWI as Grand Guignol.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Doubleday, 1966). Poe remains horror's greatest literary practitioner. His stories are as searing today as they were when first published (between 1827 and 1846). Vital.

Powers, Tim. *The Anubis Gates* (Ace, 1983), *On Stranger Tides* (Ace, 1987), *The Stress of Her Regard* (Ace, 1989), and *Declare* (HarperCollins, 2001). Ingenious blends of history and macabre fantasy, filled with body-snatchers, Voudun, vampires, and djinn. Excellent resource material on running historical horror. Powers' modern-day secret-magic series – *Last Call* (William Morrow, 1992), *Expiration Date* (Tor, 1996), and *Earthquake Weather* (Tor, 1997) – is just as good, and adds possession, ghosts, and ritual magic.

Priest, Cherie. *Fathom* (Tor, 2008) and *Those Who Went Remain There Still* (Subterranean, 2008). Two fine American monster stories, featuring Leviathan and a horrible bird-thing *almost* killed by Daniel Boone.

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire* (Knopf, 1976). The novel that revamped the legend for the post-moral world, emphasizing the psychological horror, guilt, and loneliness of vampiric immortality. Along with its many sequels, *the* reference for a turnabout campaign in which the heroes are vampires.

Roszak, Theodore. *Flicker* (Summit, 1991). Deeply creepy conspiratorial history of early horror film.

Saberhagen, Fred. *The Dracula Tape* (Warner, 1975), *The Holmes-Dracula File* (Ace, 1978), and *An Old Friend of the Family* (Ace, 1979). Inverts the Dracula story, portraying the Count as a misunderstood defender of his homeland.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones, 1818). The original mad scientist/construct novel.

Shepard, Lucius. *Green Eyes* (Ace, 1984). Pseudoscience zombies and a genuinely creepy tropical atmosphere. *Louisiana Breakdown* (Golden Gryphon, 2003) is a Frazerian fertility-cult novel steeped in Southern Gothic.

Simmons, Dan. *Song of Kali* (Bluejay, 1985), *Carrion Comfort* (Dark Harvest, 1989), *Children of the Night* (Putnam, 1992), and *The Terror* (Little, Brown, 2007). Excellent, stark horrors of (respectively) Calcutta cultists, psionic vampires, AIDS (and Dracula), and Arctic exploration.

Smith, Clark Ashton. *Out of Space and Time* (Arkham House, 1942). Smith's first collection of Cthulhu Mythos stories, which have a lush, lyrical cruelty all their own. *A Rendezvous in Averoigne* (Arkham House, 1988) is the best current omnibus of Smith.

Smith, Thorne. *Topper* (McBride, 1926). The first "friendly ghost" story. It has given birth to countless film and video imitations, but the funny, sexy, irreverent original remains unsurpassed.

Stableford, Brian. *The Empire of Fear* (Simon & Schuster, 1988). Alternate-historical viral-vampire novel. *The Werewolves of London* (Simon & Schuster, 1990) begins an increasingly complex, mystical saga of cruel angels and family tragedy.

Steakley, John. *Vampire$* (Roc, 1990). Plain-and-simple vampire-hunting adrenaline. Absolutely perfect model for fearless vampire-killer campaigns.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886). A horror classic. Stevenson wrote other tales of horror and adventure, especially "Thrawn Janet" (1881) and "The Body Snatcher" (1884). The latter is about a grave robber, and has nothing to do with any movie invasion.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* (Constable, 1897). Still the greatest vampire novel of them all. Stoker's lesser works can be enjoyably pulpy, such as *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (Heinemann, 1903), which provided the basic inspiration for the 1932 film *The Mummy; Lair of the White Worm* (William Rider & Son, 1911), which became a gloriously weird Ken Russell film in 1988; and *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories* (George Routledge, 1914).

Straub, Peter. *Ghost Story* (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979). A surprisingly successful attempt to Americanize and novelize the classic English ghost story form.

Strieber, Whitley. *The Wolfen* (William Morrow, 1978). Somehow believable novel of a hidden race of wolf-men living in New York City.

Weinberg, Robert. *The Devil's Auction* (Leisure, 1990) and *The Armageddon Box* (Leisure, 1991). Modern pulp horror in slam-bang style, with plenty of occult name-dropping.

Wellman, Manly Wade. *Who Fears the Devil?* (Paizo, 2010). These beautiful stories, written between 1951 and 1987, are set in rural America and give a perspective on Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (and on rural America) remarkably different from Lovecraft's. *Worse Things Waiting* (Carcosa House, 1973) collects more great horror stories.

Wheatley, Dennis. *The Devil Rides Out* (Hutchinson, 1934), *Strange Conflict* (Hutchinson, 1941), *The Haunting of Toby Jugg* (Hutchinson, 1948), *To the Devil – a Daughter* (Hutchinson, 1953), *The Ka of Gifford Hillary* (Hutchinson, 1956), and *The Satanist* (Hutchinson, 1960). Spies, Satanists, and tough-guy action; Wheatley's "Black Magic" series has everything a horror game could want.

Wilson, F. Paul. *The Keep* (William Morrow, 1981). A morally tangled story of a demonic vampire preying on the SS. *The Tomb* (Berkley, 1984) is a remarkably successful update of the old Sax Rohmer-style "weird menace" pulp horror to the modern day; its sequels paint a long-form cosmic horror story amid the thrills.

Wilson, Robert Charles. *The Perseids and Other Stories* (Tor, 2000). SF author Wilson takes on horror in this astonishing anthology that echoes M.R. James, Lovecraft, and Barker.

Yarbro, Chelsea Quinn. *Hôtel Transylvania* (St. Martin's, 1978). The first in a long series of historical romance novels starring the heroic, gyneolatrous vampire, the Comte de Saint-Germain.

Zelazny, Roger. *A Night in the Lonesome October* (AvoNova/William Morrow, 1993). Humorous horror novel of a Halloween night where the world might or might not perish forever; narrated by Jack the Ripper's dog, Snuff.

Comics and Manga

Akino, Matsuri. *Pet Shop of Horrors* (Asahi Sonorama, 1995-1998). Cursed L.A. Chinatown pet shop deals rightful horrors to its customers. The sequel is *Pet Shop of Horrors – Tokyo* (Asahi Sonorama, 2005-present).

Bissette, Steve (editor). *Taboo* (SpiderBaby Grafix/Tundra/Kitchen Sink, 1989-1995). A semi-regular anthology notable for the stellar quality of its contributors. Works hard to live up to its name.

Brereton, Dan. *Nocturnals: Black Planet* (Malibu, 1995). The first in an irregular series featuring supernatural protagonists battling worse horrors, the real draw is Brereton's lush, Gothic painted art.

Brown, Chester. *Yummy Fur* (Vortex, 1986-1994). While not exactly a horror story, it remains a genuinely frightening landmark of the comics medium. Particularly gut-wrenching is the fiercely ironic "Ed the Happy Clown" serial running in the first 20 issues of the book. Definitely requires a mature sensibility.

Burns, Charles. *Black Hole* (Kitchen Sink/Fantagraphics 1995-2005). Haunting art anchors a tale of sexually transmitted mutation.

Conway, Gerry, et al. *Werewolf by Night* (Marvel, 1972-1977). Reliable and workmanlike werewolf comic.

Delano, Jamie, et al. *Hellblazer* (DC/Vertigo, 1988-present). Ongoing flagship horror title centers on a British sorcerer and the shambles surrounding him. Garth Ennis' and Mike Carey's runs are particularly good.

DeMatteis, J. M. *I . . . Vampire* (DC, 1981-1983). This suspenseful vampire drama was the main feature in *House of Mystery* from #290 to #319.

Ellis, Warren. *Gravel* (Avatar, 1999-present). The adventures of British "combat magician" William Gravel began in *Strange Kiss.* Now a regular series.

Feldstein, Al, et al. *Tales from the Crypt* (EC Comics, 1950-1955). This dime comic and its EC stable-mates *The Haunt of Fear* and *The Vault of Horror* "corrupted" an entire generation, changing the face of American horror forever by combining stories of remarkable psychological and social insight with genuinely disturbing gore by some of the greatest comics artists who ever lived.

Fleisher, Michael, et al. *Wrath of the Spectre* (DC, 1988). Reprints the classic Jim Aparo-illustrated horrific-vengeance run of DC's ghostly superhero from *Adventure* #431 to #440. John Ostrander's run on the *Spectre* title from 1992 to 1998 is also worth reading.

Gerber, Steve, et al. *Vampire Tales* (Marvel, 1973-1975). This anthology series is best known for showcasing Roy Thomas' creation Morbius, the Living Vampire, the first vampire in comics since the CCA ban of 1954, and a unique techno-vampire for a superhero cosmos.

Ito, Junji. *Tomie* (Shogakukan, 1987). The story of a lust-inspiring revenant. Ito's *Uzumaki* (Shogakukan, 1998) presents geometric spirals as foci of horror, while his *Gyo* (Shogakukan, 2001-2002) brings up a marine nightmare from the deeps.

Iwaaki, Hitoshi. *Parasyte* (Kodansha, 1990-1995). SF-horror features an alien parasite invasion, complete with sentient hand!

Kirkman, Robert. *The Walking Dead* (Image, 2003-present). Fine, uncompromising serial follows survivors through a zombie post-apocalypse.

Kubert, Joe (editor), et al. *Weird War Tales* (DC, 1971-1983). Occasionally brilliant war-horror anthology series became the spawning ground for the Creature Commandos. Another signature feature, The Haunted Tank, first appeared in *G.I. Combat.*

> *I still dream of teeth and power.*
>
> *– Dracula, in* ***Bizarre Adventures*** *#33*

Lash, Batton. *Wolff and Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre* (Exhibit A Press, 1979-present). Humorous look at the legal troubles of the supernatural. Continues under the title *Supernatural Law.*

Mignola, Mike. *Hellboy* (Dark Horse, 1993-present). Larger-than-life pulp horror alternates with surprisingly delicate spectral folklore. Companion title *B.P.R.D.* introduces serial soap operatics to the mix.

Miura, Kentaro. *Berserk* (Hakusensha, 1990-present). Dark fantasy manga set against a surreal version of medieval Europe.

Moore, Alan. *From Hell* (Borderlands, 1995). With Eddie Campbell's intricate black-and-white art, Moore tells a story of Jack the Ripper, sacred geometry, and the conspiratorial horror at the heart of the 20th century.

Moore, Alan; Wein, Len; et al. *Swamp Thing* (DC/Vertigo; 1972-1976, 1982-1996, 2001-2002, 2004-2006). This Gothic monster comic has had some remarkably wretched periods, but its first run, by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson, raised the genre to new heights.

Then in the 1980s, under writer Alan Moore and artists Steve Bissette and John Totleben, *Swamp Thing* unexpectedly became arguably the best mass-market comic of all time. More recent runs by writers Rick Veitch and Doug Wheeler are also exemplary. Don't let the two campy movies scare you off.

Morrison, Grant. *Doom Patrol* (DC/Vertigo, 1989-1993). Surrealistic superhero book with genuine moments of horror throughout. *The Invisibles* (DC/Vertigo, 1994-2000) is high-flying conspiracy without a net.

Niles, Steve (editor). *Fly In My Eye* (Eclipse/Arcane, 1988-1992). Consistently excellent, inconsistently published trade-paperback-sized anthology. Niles' *30 Days of Night* (IDW, 2002) is a raw, primal story of vampires invading Barrow, Alaska.

Ōtsuka, Eiji. *The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service* (Kadokawa Shoten, 2002-present). The eponymous service carries out the wishes of the dead.

Rennie, Gordon. *Caballistics, Inc.* (Rebellion, 2002-present). This intense tale of black magic and black ops runs in *2000 AD*.

Sala, Richard. *Black Cat Crossing* (Kitchen Sink, 1993), *The Chuckling Whatsit* (Fantagraphics, 1997), *Peculia* (Fantagraphics, 2002), *Mad Night* (Fantagraphics, 2005), and *The Grave-Robber's Daughter* (Fantagraphics, 2006). The comics version of German expressionist film. Brilliant images and a storyline that always threatens to become camp horror, but never quite does. Everything by Sala is excellent.

Sclavi, Tiziano, et al. *Dylan Dog* (Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1986-present). Offbeat, layered Italian comic about a London-based occult investigator.

Umezu, Kazuo. *Reptilia* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1965). The "Father of Horror Manga" presents a shape-shifting snake-girl. His *Cat-Eyed Boy* (Asahi Sonorama, 1967-1968) is EC-style horror anthology. *The Drifting Classroom* (Shogakukan, 1972-1974), about a time-lost elementary school slowly succumbing to madness, is often considered the greatest work of the genre.

Wolfman, Marv. *Tomb of Dracula* (Marvel, 1972-1979). A slam-bang scare-fest backed by some of the best artistic talent of the 1970s. The strong characterization of Dracula is memorable.

Filmography

Movies have given us our most graphic images of horror. Those listed below are all suggested viewing, albeit sometimes as story mines rather than as fine cinema. Most are classics, must-sees for horror gamers – but some are obscure masterpieces, unlikely to show up on late-night television. Many are available on DVD; check Netflix or your local dealer.

28 Days Later (Danny Boyle, 2002). Riveting reinvention of the zombie film features virus-infected "fast zombies" and apocalyptic urban vistas.

Abominable Dr. Phibes, The (Robert Fuest, 1971). A campy variation on the "evil genius" model, Vincent Price's Dr. Phibes is a mad musician who kills his enemies by using the Ten Plagues of Egypt.

Abominable Snowman, The (Val Guest, 1957). This low-budget, black-and-white feature – a very early release from Britain's legendary Hammer Films – presents a curiously low-key but exciting cryptid hunt.

Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979). Neo-Lovecraftian SF horror brought the creature-from-outer-space film to new heights of terror *and* believability simultaneously. Also presents a very gameable story. The first sequel, *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986) is action rather than suspense, but still quite gameable in a different way.

Alien Raiders (Ben Rock, 2008). Fearless Monster Hunt becomes hostage-taking screw-up, or vice versa: a horror gaming session given terse, tense filmic life.

American Werewolf in London, An (John Landis, 1981). An excellent study of the genesis of a werewolf, both startling and funny. The dream sequences are the most terrifying part of the movie, inspirational for oneiric horrors.

Battle Royale (Kinji Fukasuku, 2000). Paranoid horror about a nightmarish school competition.

Beetlejuice (Tim Burton, 1988). The best modern haunted-house comedy. Of special interest for its creepy-yet-funny view of the afterlife, which one could easily port to a campaign where *everyone* is a ghost.

Believers, The (John Schlesinger, 1987). Excellent suspense movie about a man's battle with a malevolent Santería cult.

Birds, The (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963). Nature goes mad; a bravura course in using any common element to build terror.

Black Sunday (Mario Bava, 1960). Black and white so rich you'd swear it was color, an undead witch, and a haunted castle give this Italian film style to spare.

Blair Witch Project, The (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999). Low-fi horror builds nearly perfect atmosphere of suspense, terror, and dread with verité style.

Cabin Fever (Eli Roth, 2002). Uses flesh-eating bacteria to drive non-supernatural survival horror to the brink.

Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The (Robert Wiene, 1920). The first horror film masterpiece; its surrealistic sets, camera angles, and storyline remain unmatched today.

Candyman (Bernard Rose, 1992). Chicago urban legend manifests as spectral horror in this gritty, powerful evocation of a Clive Barker short story.

Cat People (Jacques Tourneur, 1942). Produced by horror maestro Val Lewton, the film that saved RKO is subtle, brilliant, and breathtakingly terrifying. That said, Paul Schrader's 1982 remake has a nude Nastassja Kinski.

Cemetery Man (Michele Soavi, 1994). Existential zombie love story about a gravedigger and his undead girlfriend. And then it just gets weird.

Chinese Ghost Story, A (Ching Siu-Tung, 1987). Martial arts, comedy, romance, and tree-vampires with extensible tongues!

Cloverfield (Matt Reeves, 2008). Daikaiju film shot from the victims' perspective; encapsulates the horror of powerlessness in the new millennium.

Deliverance (John Boorman, 1972). A non-supernatural horror classic of civilization against savagery, the epitome of the Gauntlet story.

Descent, The (Neil Marshall, 2005). Women on a spelunking trip encounter troglodyte monsters; pitch-perfect suspense and terror.

Devil's Backbone, The (Guillermo del Toro, 2001). A nigh-perfect 20-minute ghost story nestles in this otherwise predictable two-hour film. Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) succeeds with dark fantastic imagery and disintegrating narrative, although its underlying message remains confused.

Dog Soldiers (Neil Marshall, 2002). British troops vs. werewolves in the best werewolf film of the millennium . . . so far.

Don't Look Now (Nicolas Roeg, 1973). Art-house tale of bereavement plays with perception and faith when Julie Christie trusts a psychic and Donald Sutherland thinks he sees his daughter's ghost.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931). Fredric March received a well-deserved Oscar for his dual lead in this creepy, gas-lit horror film.

Dracula (Terence Fisher, 1958). Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing square off in the best film version of the novel, epitomizing the lush, sensual, almost operatic tradition of Hammer Films. Known as *The Horror of Dracula* in America. Tod Browning's 1931 version – the classic starring Bela Lugosi – is brilliantly shot, but badly marred by an abysmal script.

Event Horizon (Paul W.S. Anderson, 1997). "Haunted spaceship" SF film builds cosmic horror magnificently for the first three acts. Then, the producers ruin it.

Evil Dead II (Sam Raimi, 1987). This excessive movie careens wildly between gore, slapstick, and genuine fright; loads of fun and lots of good ideas. Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1981) was essentially the same film with a fraction of the special-effects budget. *Army of Darkness* (1992), nominally *Evil Dead 3,* is a swell fantasy-adventure roller coaster with little true horror.

Exorcist, The (William Friedkin, 1973). This movie about a little girl tormented by demons, and the battle for her soul, is an atmospheric must-see, and a brilliant example of the power of the prosaic scale.

Five Million Years to Earth (Roy Ward Baker, 1967). Sensational British SF horror story about psionic monsters buried beneath London.

Flatliners (Joel Schumacher, 1990). Intensely gameable setup and rich atmospherics save this disorganized film about a team of would-be thanatologists exploring the afterlife by dying repeatedly.

Fly, The (Kurt Neumann, 1958). Silly but unsettling, thanks to Neumann's direction. The remake (David Cronenberg, 1986) is gorier and less effective, but more "realistic." Both are worth seeing.

Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), and *Son of Frankenstein* (Rowland V. Lee, 1939). The prototypical mad scientist/construct films, worth seeing for their insight into the man-as-God issue as well as their chills. None of the hundred-plus Frankenstein sequels and remakes measure up to these originals, although *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957) comes close.

Freaks (Tod Browning, 1932). A respectful-but-grim study of the fear of mutilation and of the dangers of betraying an insular, marginalized community not unlike the Unseelie.

Fright Night (Tom Holland, 1985). Affectionate look at vampire-hunting movies that slowly becomes a truly tense chiller.

Frighteners, The (Peter Jackson, 1996). Excellent story about a ghost-hunter; moves smoothly from light comedy to dark horror at a rapid clip.

From Dusk Till Dawn (Robert Rodriguez, 1996). Action-camp horror full of violence, vampires, and attitude. Scary and thrill-packed, but not terrifying.

Ghostbusters (Ivan Reitman, 1984). A tightly plotted group-of-adventurers-encounter-the-supernatural movie, this time played for laughs. Modern setting, great special effects, and a textbook example of how to create supernatural adventures.

Ginger Snaps (John Fawcett, 2000). Mordant, clever film ties lycanthropy to female puberty.

Gojira (Ishirō Honda, 1954). Though followed by an infinite series of ultra-campy sequels, the original film (without Raymond Burr) is bleak, powerful, and very, very scary. Godzilla is nobody's big monster buddy here; he's a literally unstoppable force of nature, a walking embodiment of nuclear terror.

Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978). The first and best movie of the slasher-flick boom of the 1970s and 1980s. The sequels are all forgettable; Rob Zombie's 2007 remake is barely forgivable.

Haunting, The (Robert Wise, 1963). Quiet, tense ghost story, or a subtle tale of psychological disintegration?

Either way, an often-overlooked horror masterpiece with useful roleplaying applications. Addresses the interaction of psychological and psychic pressures in a supernatural situation. Avoid the 1999 remake at all costs!

Haute Tension (Alexandre Aja, 2003). French grindhouse-style psycho-killer movie with a hellacious twist.

Hellraiser (Clive Barker, 1987). Gory, fetishistic horror directed by a noted horror author. Not for the squeamish, but Barker's vision is truly hellish; plenty of roleplaying potential for those with a taste for Grand Guignol.

Hills Have Eyes, The (Wes Craven, 1977). Inspired update of the "Sawney Beane" cannibal clan combined with the grindhouse revenge-horror plot. Ignore the 2006 remake.

Host, The (Bong Joon-ho, 2006). Marvelous South Korean kaiju film combines fear of government, environmental terror, fast action, and clever family dynamics.

Hostel (Eli Roth, 2005). The slyest and most effective of the new generation of so-called "torture porn"; updates the faerie seduction myth with grim effect.

House (Steve Miner, 1986). Suffers from jokiness, but the essential concept of the haunted hypergeometrical house makes a great game element. The sequel is even sillier, but rings further changes on the setting.

House of Wax (André de Toth, 1953). Vincent Price gives one of his richest performances, as the wax-museum curator who turns victims into sculptures for his Chamber of Horrors. Highly evocative, and a great Victorian atmosphere throughout.

Howling, The (Joe Dante, 1981). The other great 1981 werewolf movie.

Hunger, The (Tony Scott, 1983). Ancient, decadent vampires live the life of the idle rich. Short of substance, but scary and very sexy with leads Catherine Deneuve, Susan Sarandon, and David Bowie.

I Walked with a Zombie (Jacques Tourneur, 1943). Ignore the title. This Val Lewton-produced psychological chiller is a transposition of *Jane Eyre* to the Caribbean, and a respectful, haunting look at Voudun.

In the Mouth of Madness (John Carpenter, 1995). Surreal Lovecraftian tale of a missing horror writer whose books are changing reality.

Invaders from Mars (William Cameron Menzies, 1953). A minor alien-invasion classic that set the pattern for the 1950s' science-fiction horrors.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956). A paranoiac horror thriller *without* monsters, special effects, or even death, and all the more terrifying for it. The 1978 remake is rather antique now; the 1993 remake is still worth seeing; the 2007 remake has its moments but ultimately fails.

Jacob's Ladder (Adrian Lyne, 1990). Hallucinogenic psychological horror surrounds a Vietnam vet. Surrealism at its horrific finest.

Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975). A prime example of the fear of nature. This pure, elemental battle against a great white shark demonstrates that horror easily transcends the supernatural.

Jeepers Creepers (Victor Salva, 2001). A wonderful monster, shocking pacing, and believably random folklore make this teens-in-peril psycho-killer movie a triumph.

Legend of Hell House, The (John Hough, 1973). This film, about a group of people promised big money for proving or disproving the existence of an afterlife in the granddaddy of all haunted houses, makes a grand adventure premise. Lots of detail on the use of psychic abilities.

Let the Right One In (Tomas Alfredson, 2008). Flawless Swedish vampire film is the single best – perhaps the best possible – exploration of the "Renfield" character type.

Lost Boys, The (Joel Schumacher, 1987). New Wave update and vampirization of the Peter Pan story, set in 1980s California. Light, but lots of fun.

Mist, The (Frank Darabont, 2007). Atmospheric adaptation of a Stephen King novella combines psychological and cosmic horror with superb monsters.

Mummy, The (Karl Freund, 1932). Short on shocks, but maintains a horrific mood throughout. Gave us the "forbidden reincarnated love" and "human guise of the mummy" reused by later films. The loose remake (Stephen Sommers, 1999) is great, gameable pulp adventure.

Near Dark (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987). An intelligent, very scary vampire film in which the word "vampire" never appears. Set in the modern-day West, the vampires here are monsters of social upheaval – the ones your mother warned you about.

Night of the Demon (Jacques Tourneur, 1957). Demon-summoning scrolls and Satanic cults in England. A visible demon, added at the producer's insistence, mars but doesn't ruin this masterpiece of suggestion.

Night of the Living Dead (George A. Romero, 1968). Combines stomach-turning walking-dead action with bleak social commentary. Only equaled by its sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (George A. Romero, 1978), set in a besieged shopping mall, which the remake (Zack Snyder, 2004) surprisingly complements.

Night Watch (Timur Bekmambetov, 2004). Trippy film of dueling supernaturals in grimy modern Moscow plays with scope continuously. *Day Watch* (2006) is the worthy sequel.

Nightmare on Elm Street, A (Wes Craven, 1984). After its countless sequels, it's easy to forget just how unsettling this film can be, due largely to its brilliant central concept and imaginative and surreal special effects.

Nomads (John McTiernan, 1986). Dreamlike, increasingly paranoid tale of nomadic spirits haunting a modern anthropologist in Los Angeles.

Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, 1922). Murnau's silent masterpiece is a surrealist Gothic. The remake (Werner Herzog, 1979) presents the nosferatu as the irruption of fatal reality into comfortable bourgeois life.

Onibaba (Kaneto Shindō, 1964). Brutal realism combines with hints of demonic power in this Japanese film about desperate peasants trapped by poverty and war.

Others, The (Alejandro Amenábar, 2001). Assured mood piece harkens back to old-school ghost-story films; Nicole Kidman gives one of the great nervous horror performances.

Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960). Riveting film about a camera-buff and sex-killer indicts the audience for voyeurism.

Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, 1982). A flashy ghost story about an average suburban family. The most impressive aspect of this movie is Hooper's ability to make everyday objects – TV sets, stuffed toys, steaks – seem alive and malevolent.

Hey . . . you wanna see something really scary?
– The Passenger, in ***Twilight Zone: The Movie***

Pontypool (Bruce McDonald, 2008). Canadian low-budget indie presents zombies as a semantic threat – contagion spreads by word of mouth.

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). The first modern psycho-killer movie. There's no gore, just suspense, misdirection, and a creepy atmosphere. Even if you've heard the plot, see the movie.

Re-Animator (Stuart Gordon, 1985) and *From Beyond* (Stuart Gordon, 1986). Among the best feature-film adaptations of Lovecraft's work, but based on third-rate stories. Still, full of supremely good-humored awfulness.

Resident Evil (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2002). Thrilling horror-actioner based on the video game gleefully combines anti-capitalist paranoia with zombie face-chewing.

Ringu (Hideo Nakata, 1998). A Japanese suspense masterpiece, borrowing from many other horror movies but blending them into its own tense story of a deadly videotape. American remake *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002) actually lives up to the original!

Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, 1968). Witchcraft and Satanism among the uptown New York affluent. Polanski masterfully builds the ominous, paranoid atmosphere.

Ruins, The (Carter Smith, 2008). Nail-biting survival horror traps Western tourists atop an enigmatic Mayan pyramid in a sly inversion of Lovecraftian tropes.

Scream (Wes Craven, 1996). The ultimate in postmodern slasher flicks. The characters' attempt to play by the horror-movie "rules" lifts this far above the run-of-the-mill psycho-killer flick, as does Craven's assured direction. Both sequels are decent as well.

Seventh Victim, The (Mark Robson, 1943). Another Val Lewton-produced psychological horror film with complex characters, it deals with disillusionment and suicide. Interesting to GMs for its handling of a Satanic cult, mysterious and unknown throughout the movie.

Shaun of the Dead (Edgar Wright, 2004). Walks the tricky line between hilarious send-up and gross-out thriller while emphasizing the zombie film's role as cultural critique.

Shining, The (Stanley Kubrick, 1980). Not much of an adaptation of the novel, but a brilliant movie. Superb direction, an eerie score, and a memorable performance by Jack Nicholson contribute to a terrifying atmosphere.

Silence of the Lambs, The (Jonathan Demme, 1991). The most mature and polished psychological horror-thriller of recent decades. The film's combination of gothic imagery and seeming realism works on many levels.

Sixth Sense, The (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). A luminous combination of ghost story and psychological horror tale.

Strangers, The (Bryan Bertino, 2008). Invaded house horror at its purest and most arbitrary.

Sunshine (Danny Boyle, 2007). Implacable SF horror film goes badly off the rails plot-wise but remains compellingly watchable.

Suspiria (Dario Argento, 1977). Witchcraft, gore, and nigh-hallucinogenic scenery make this Italian film eminently watchable, if no more sensible.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The (Tobe Hooper, 1974). This no-budget tour-de-force redefines the psycho killer as modern werewolf. Point to notice: the horrors in this film take place *entirely* in broad daylight.

Thing from Another World, The (Christian Nyby, 1951). Notable for the conflict between the scientists, who want to capture or communicate with the Thing, and the soldiers, who want to kill it. John Carpenter's remake, *The Thing* (1982), more than gains in visceral terror and isolation what it loses in cosmic scope.

Thir13en Ghosts (Steve Beck, 2001). The most successful of the William Castle remake series has a great introductory scene and the wildest, most postmodern haunted house ever.

This Is Not a Love Song (Bille Eltringham, 2002). Two thieves get trapped in the remote British countryside in a merciless survival horror tale with no supernatural elements.

Tremors (Ron Underwood, 1990). A seamless, brilliant updating of the 1950s B-movie to the modern era pits a small desert town against giant, malevolent sandworms.

Uninvited, The (Lewis Allen, 1944). Superb, atmospheric ghost story in the spirit of Val Lewton.

Uzumaki (Higuchinsky, 2000). Vertiginous, occasionally discordant adaptation of the manga conveys "the uncanny" better than almost any other film.

Vanishing, The (George Sluizer, 1988). Psychological horror cripples a man when his wife suddenly – vanishes. Avoid the mediocre U.S. remake of this Dutch gem.

Wicker Man, The (Robin Hardy, 1973). Set in modern-day Great Britain, this movie concerns a small offshore island where the inhabitants still keep an interest in the "old religion." Celtic mythology in a modern setting, done with thriller-movie flair and a sense of humor. Neil LaBute's 2006 version may be the worst remake ever filmed.

Wolf Man, The (George Waggner, 1941). Not the first werewolf picture, but the one that set the rules for the Hollywood wolf-man as tragic victim-monster.

Young Frankenstein (Mel Brooks, 1974). Uproarious send-up of the whole horror film genre.

Television

Television series can have as many directors as they have episodes. Thus, credits are omitted for brevity, although some annotations name the creative masterminds involved.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003). Possibly the best continuing horror TV series ever, and a model of story-arc development. Easy on the eyes, too.

Criminal Minds (2005-present). Procedural drama about FBI serial-killer profilers.

Dark Shadows (1966-1971, 1991). This no-budget 1960s Gothic soap opera still commands a fanatically loyal audience today, due to a memorable ensemble of ghoulish protagonists.

Forever Knight (1992-1996). Vampire police drama with a cult following.

Fringe (2008-present). Pseudoscience becomes mysticism in this stylish conspiracy thriller series.

Ghost Hunters (2004-present). Sci-Fi Channel "reality" show offers low-fi thrills and chills.

Invaders, The (1967-1968). Alien-invasion paranoia with a 1960s twist of low-key excellence.

Kingdom, The (1994, 1997). Two very unsettling four-episode series about a ghost-filled hospital, created by Danish director Lars von Trier.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker (1974-1975). This campy show had a sleazy but intrepid reporter chasing down a different monster every week, over the objections of the obsessively skeptical authorities. Followed two hit pilot films (1972 and 1973).

Masters of Horror (2005-2007). Generally excellent Showtime series of original films by acclaimed horror directors.

Night Gallery (1969-1973). Rod Serling's worthy successor to *The Twilight Zone*.

Supernatural (2005-present). Blue-collar haunt-stompers battle ghosts, demons, and monsters in America's "flyover country." Relentlessly clever writing and excellent production backstop this increasingly compelling show.

Tales from the Darkside (1984-1988). Produced by George A. Romero, this is probably the best of the 1980s horror anthology series (including *Freddy's Nightmares* and *Monsters*), despite cheesy special effects.

Torchwood (2006-present). British government operatives battle the Outside and sleep with each other in this wild *Doctor Who* spinoff.

True Blood (2008-present). Puts an HBO spin on the "sexy vampire" in the post-*Twilight* era.

Twilight Zone, The (1959-1964). Rod Serling's groundbreaking series defined and perfected TV horror storytelling. Essential. Reincarnated several times (1985-1989, 2002-2003) with varying degrees of success.

Twin Peaks (1990-1991). Atmospheric horror mystery created by David Lynch goes rapidly downhill after the central mystery is solved in the second season.

Ultraviolet (1998). Superb six-episode British series about a covert death squad's war against vampires.

War of the Worlds (1988-1990). 1950s alien paranoia updated to the George H.W. Bush era with lively gusto, if little coherence.

X-Files, The (1993-2002). At its peak (circa season 5), the best horror on television. Conspiracies, UFOs, and monsters all blend with excellent camerawork and production for an atmospheric triumph.

Animation

Some of these titles are feature films, while others are TV or OVA (original video animation) series. Feature films list a director; series don't.

Ayakashi (2006). Horror anthology includes a version of the classic *Yotsuya Kaidan*.

Boogiepop Phantom (2000). Nonlinear horror mystery set in a Japanese high school.

Demon City Shinjuku (Yoshiaki Kawajiri, 1988). Evil fate destroys a Tokyo neighborhood, turning it into a haunted urban wasteland.

Hellsing (2001-2002, 2006-present). A secret society battles monsters in Britain; adapted from the manga by Kouta Hirano (1997-2008).

Mononoke (2007). Wandering medicine seller battles unnatural spirits. Spinoff of *Ayakashi*.

Nightmare Before Christmas, The (Henry Selick, 1993). Giddy animated musical with much worthwhile Tim Burton-driven surreal imagery.

Perfect Blue (Satoshi Kon, 1998). Philip K. Dick-style thriller of psychological disintegration and identity centers on a former J-pop starlet.

Scooby Doo, Where Are You! (1969-1972). The great silly horror show, despite the total absence of actual horror. Consider it a warning: The average player group behaves far too much like the Scooby gang.

Serial Experiments Lain (1998). Deeply philosophical and subtly terrifying story of conspiracy, perception, and reality.

Sleeping Beauty (Clyde Geronimi, 1959). Yes, the Walt Disney feature. Seriously. Watch it again in the dark.

Vampire Hunter D (Toyoo Ashida, 1985). Dark-future SF romance features a split-personality vampire-slayer who battles a blood-drinking aristocracy in the year 12,090 A.D.

Witch Hunter Robin (2002-2003). Secret society battles witches, who have a weird genetic angle.

Ludography

You didn't think we'd forget about horror *games,* did you?

Roleplaying Games

Horror games are among the most popular, long-lived, and artistically important in the history of RPGs. Here are only a few of the absolute best.

Craig, Malcolm. ***Cold City*** (Contested Ground Studios, 2006). Game of betrayal and trust – and monster-hunting – in Cold War Berlin.

Czege, Paul. ***My Life with Master*** (Half Meme Press, 2003). Innovative narrative pulls players through the emotional crisis of every Gothic villain's "Igor."

Dansky, Richard, et al. ***Wraith: The Oblivion*** *Second Edition* (White Wolf, 1996). Bleak, personal roleplaying: You play a ghost, and the dark shadow of another player's ghost.

Hindmarch, Will, et al. ***Requiem Chronicler's Guide*** (White Wolf, 2006). Brilliant anthology of ways to deconstruct and rebuild the classic ***Vampire*** setting, rules, and feel. A must-read for GMs, even if you don't play ***Vampire.***

Jonsson, Gunilla and Petersén, Michael. ***Kult*** (Metropolis Ltd., 1993). Gnostic horror at its most uncompromising.

Laws, Robin D. ***Fear Itself*** (Pelgrane Press, 2007). Laws' *GUMSHOE System,* designed for investigative horror, demonstrates that it can handle survival horror, too.

Nesmith, Bruce, et al. ***Ravenloft*** (TSR, 1990). This ***AD&D*** supplement combines classic fantasy with classic horror in a near-perfect setting book.

Petersen, Sandy. ***Call of Cthulhu*** (Chaosium, 1981). Brilliantly adapts Lovecraft's cosmic horror to the RPG form; an incomparable success of design, setting, and feel that spawned decades of astonishing supplements and adventures.

Tynes, John. ***Puppetland*** (Hogshead, 1996). Minimalist, experimental horror in a world where the Puppetmaster is dead.

Tynes, John, et al. ***Delta Green*** (Pagan Publishing, 1997). ***Call of Cthulhu*** supplement that melds the Cthulhu Mythos into 1990s UFO-conspiracy paranoia with perfect pitch.

Tynes, John and Stolze, Greg. ***Unknown Armies*** (Atlas Games, 1999). Ruthlessly human-centered, brilliantly original game of the "occult underground," and the choices you make to survive there.

Wendig, Chuck, et al. ***Hunter: The Vigil*** (White Wolf, 2008). The Compleat Monster-Hunter Game, playable at almost any scope.

GURPS Third Edition

Many ***GURPS*** *Third Edition* supplements contain horror material. Much of this is usable with any system, and most of the rest is easily adapted to *Fourth Edition.* Almost every historical or fantasy ***GURPS*** book has monsters or details that can inspire horror; the following supplements focus on specific horrors and provide terrifying information.

Carella, C.J. ***GURPS Voodoo.*** Secret war of ritual magicians serves as the entry for an in-depth look at Voudun. ***GURPS Thaumatology*** adapts the magic system to *Fourth Edition* as "Path/Book magic."

Elliott, Paul and McCubbin, Chris. ***GURPS Atomic Horror.*** Cinematic SF horrors of the 1950s, and the historical background on that decade.

Findley, Nigel. ***GURPS Illuminati.*** Conspiratorial *everything,* including horror.

Grate, Lane. ***GURPS Blood Types.*** In-depth discussion of vampires, as PCs and foes alike.

Hite, Kenneth. ***GURPS Cabal.*** Secret-historical horror setting featuring lots of monsters and a Hermetic magic system (the latter adapted to *Fourth Edition* in ***GURPS Thaumatology***). Hite covers "ghost-breaking" in detail in ***GURPS All-Star Jam 2004,*** and (with William H. Stoddard) discusses the horrors of World War II in ***GURPS WWII: Weird War II.***

Johnson, Hunter (compiler). ***GURPS Monsters.*** Details 48 monsters, both classic and original, from the Minotaur to Shub-Internet.

Kenson, Stephen. ***GURPS Spirits.*** Ghosts, demons, faerie, and other (usually) immaterial troublemakers. Graeme Davis' ***GURPS Faerie*** focuses on the fae.

Koke, Jeff and Ross, S. John. ***GURPS Black Ops.*** Tongue-in-cheek action-conspiracy featuring a lot of very dangerous monsters.

Maykrantz, Scott Paul. ***GURPS Creatures of the Night.*** Speaking of "very dangerous monsters, a lot of" . . . Spawned a continuing series of *Fourth Edition* PDFs.

McCubbin, Chris. ***GURPS CthulhuPunk.*** Adapts the Cthulhu Mythos to the 21st century of ***GURPS Cyberworld*** for cosmic cyberpunk horror.

Pulver, David. ***GURPS Reign of Steel.*** Post-apocalyptic horror setting featuring malevolent AIs and killer robots. ***GURPS Technomancer*** is an alternate-history setting where magic spells – and lots of monsters – work.

Punch, Sean. ***GURPS Undead.*** Exhaustive examination of the undead from all angles, including the "cut 'em up with a chainsaw" angle. His compilation ***GURPS Y2K*** discusses apocalypse in many forms, including the one that didn't happen in 2000.

Ramsay, Jo. ***GURPS Screampunk.*** Covers Gothic horror roleplaying in depth.

Ross, S. John. ***GURPS Warehouse 23.*** *Weird* things, including monsters, cursed artifacts, and other horror inspirations.

Schroeck, Robert M. ***GURPS Shapeshifters.*** Werewolves and their ilk, as PCs or targets – or both!

Video and Computer Games

Digital games are designed by large teams, so credits here are by *publisher.*

BioShock (2K Games, 2007). Survival horror – and powerful story – set in a ruined undersea colony of Objectivists.

Dead Space (Electronic Arts, 2008). SF zombies ("Necromorphs") on a doomed spaceship; the game wears its cinematic influences (*Stalker, Event Horizon*) on its sleeve.

Doom (id Software, 1993). Fighting demons on Mars; a classic.

Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem (Nintendo, 2002). Lovecraftian adventure RPG featuring unique "sanity effects" that interfere with the player's perceptions.

Half-Life (Valve, 1998). First-person shooter pits Dr. Gordon Freeman against horrid monsters pouring through an extradimensional rift – and against the conspiracy to cover up the incident.

Left 4 Dead (Valve, 2008). A "cinematic" game AI keeps tension and thrills taut in this survival-horror game of killing the "infected" (zombies).

Resident Evil (Capcom, 1996). Highly influential (and successful) survival-horror game.

Silent Hill (Konami, 1999). Creepy goings-on in a foggy, monster-filled town.

Thief: Deadly Shadows (Eidos Interactive, 2004). Quasi-Gothic horror stealth game set in an alternate-historical mishmash.

When Cicadas Cry (07th Expansion, 2002). Strange Japanese computer game ("sound novel") about a series of ritual killings; also known as *Higurashi When They Cry.*

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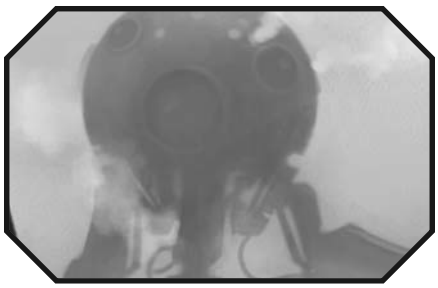

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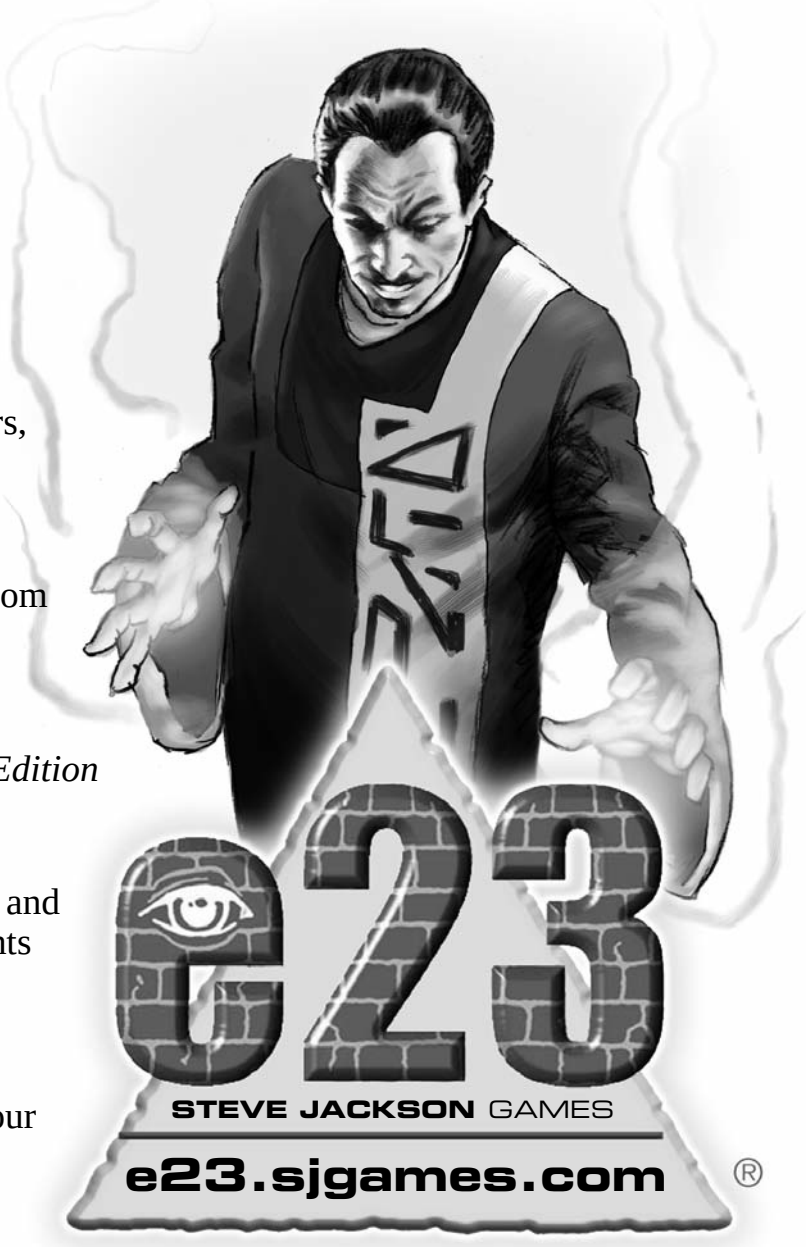

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